



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



MONDAY — 11 JUL 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	07/11 China economy stumbles; Covid war fog
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/11/business/china-economy-covid.html
GIST	<p>China's economic engine has shuddered in recent months, hurt by lockdowns imposed to curb the spread of Covid. Housing sales sagged. Many shops and restaurants in some cities shuttered, some maybe for good. Youth unemployment climbed.</p> <p>The slowdown has kindled doubts about the viability of China's stringent strategy of eliminating virtually all Covid infections — whether the cure is becoming worse than the social and economic costs of restrictions. But on a recent visit to Wuhan, the city where the pandemic first took hold, China's leader, Xi Jinping, said that extinguishing Covid remained paramount.</p> <p>"It would be preferable to have a little temporary impact on economic development, rather than let the physical safety and health of the public suffer," Mr. Xi said, state media reported. He cited the need to protect older adults as well as children from infection, and warned officials against becoming weary of the grinding two-and-a-half-year war against Covid. "Persistence," he said, "is victory."</p> <p>That elusive victory over Covid has been made harder by the fast-moving Omicron variant — and its sub-variant, BA.5, the first domestic cases of which emerged last week in China — that is slipping through the country's many defenses.</p> <p>A month after Shanghai lifted its citywide lockdown, fresh Covid cases have emerged there in recent days, prompting officials to order many of the city's 25 million residents to undergo testing. Anhui Province in eastern China enforced a virtual lockdown on two counties, and neighboring Jiangsu Province, a manufacturing heartland, is scrambling to contain new infections. Xi'an, a city of 13 million, has closed schools and many businesses after a flare-up.</p> <p>Like swatting flies with a shovel, China's Covid strategy can be effective, but also costly and contentious. It entails locking down apartment blocks, neighborhoods or even whole cities for days or weeks to stamp out even handfuls of cases. As a result, Mr. Xi's insistence on Covid zero, or "dynamic zero" as Beijing calls it, has cast an unsettling shadow over the country's economic expectations.</p> <p>The Chinese government is scheduled to release the main economic data for this year's second quarter on Friday. According to a survey by Bloomberg, economists expect that the Chinese government will report that gross domestic product grew by about 1 percent in the second quarter, compared with the same period a year earlier. That's a big comedown from the 4.8 percent expansion in the first quarter, and is likely to put the government's 5.5 percent growth goal for all of this year out of reach.</p> <p>"Uncertainty is the main factor hurting our national economic development," Yang Weimin, an economist who advises the Chinese government, said in a speech in late June to property developers, citing questions around Covid and pandemic prevention measures. He also pointed to investor wariness after crackdowns on companies accused of abusing their market dominance, flouting regulators or offending official moral codes.</p> <p>"Uncertainty is the great enemy of action," Mr. Yang said.</p>

Mr. Xi wants officials to extinguish Covid outbreaks while also shoring up the economy. In Wuhan, he visited a [laser equipment plant](#), hailing the potential of new technologies, and also visited a neighborhood that has been promoted as a model of effective Covid controls.

In practice, officials struggle with the diverging demands of Covid controls and economic recovery. The resulting strains are bearing down on China months before a Communist Party congress when Mr. Xi is almost certain to win another five-year term as the party's leader, consolidating his status as its most powerful leader since Deng Xiaoping and Mao Zedong.

Beijing has tried to boost confidence among entrepreneurs and consumers so they spend, invest and travel. But local officials, faced with the threat of dismissal for lapses in pandemic controls, often impose additional checks and restrictions on travelers and transport, adding to the disruptions and uncertainty.

"Often, the heads of different departments and companies attend one meeting in the morning about enhancing dynamic zero, and then in the afternoon a meeting about economic growth," said Wu Qiang, an independent political commentator in Beijing.

"The tensions are within Xi's own model for governing the country," he said. "The tensions really arise from him."

For the past two years, many Chinese people have accepted the Covid restrictions as irksome but necessary. But employees and employers appear increasingly impatient over lockdowns, checks and uncertainties, especially when they have loans, rent and wages to pay.

"The local government said for sure that they would get to zero in half a month, but I reckon half a month won't be enough," Wang Yongguan, who makes a living grouting walls, said in a telephone interview from Sixian County in Anhui Province, which went into lockdown. He also worried about the accompanying slump in home sales. "This year won't be any good. It wasn't to begin with."

Policymakers trying to bolster investor confidence also fear they will be accused of undermining Mr. Xi's policies to clean up companies accused of malfeasance and reckless investment, said [Christopher K. Johnson](#), the president of the China Strategies Group, citing conversations with officials in Beijing.

"Does the boss really want to relent on some of these crackdowns, or is it temporary?" Mr. Johnson said, referring to Mr. Xi. "There's a lot of uncertainty."

China's stop-start Covid restrictions may continue into next year at least, in part because the government has focused on restrictions and testing over vaccinations. Older adults have a relatively low vaccination rate. The Chinese leadership has so far refused to approve more effective, foreign-developed vaccines — a decision driven by political pride rather than medical considerations, many experts say.

Yet Chinese leaders also worry that a deep slowdown could cause social discontent, an anxiety magnified by the impending party congress. Officials are under particular pressure to contain unemployment, which among urban residents age 16 to 24 rose to 18.4 percent in May, according to [China's National Bureau of Statistics](#). More than 10 million college graduates, a record number, are joining the job search this year. Others will take refuge in graduate school.

Even in Beijing, which has avoided a citywide shutdown by imposing only limited restrictions, business can be tough. Wang Jing said his restaurant in an alleyway usually crowded with tourists had lost more than 90 percent of its income in May, when Beijing banned dining in restaurants. The limits eased in early June, but only about a third of business has come back.

"This year is for sure the toughest we've had," he said. "All my waiters have been with me for more than 10 years. They have young and old to take care of, and are waiting for me to issue wages. How could I ever fire them?"

	<p>China has been edging toward some policy compromises. Officials halved the days of quarantine imposed on international travelers and close contacts to try to reduce some of the disruption. Mr. Xi and the premier, Li Keqiang, have also obliquely hinted that annual growth might be lower than the target of 5.5 percent that the government set earlier this year. Some former officials and policy advisers have openly said that businesses need more clarity to sustain an economic recovery.</p> <p>“Our hearts can’t be riding on waves, bobbing up and down. That’s bad for economic growth and social development,” Hu Deping, a former vice chairman of All-China General Chamber of Industry and Commerce, said in a speech to Chinese private business owners in June. “Entrepreneurs will gain confidence only when there are no policy contradictions.”</p> <p>Even if China is able to contain Covid without putting major cities under lockdowns, the accumulated uncertainty is prompting some companies to rethink their plans.</p> <p>For Citrosuco, a Brazilian juice maker, business had been going well until Shanghai locked down in April. Its containers of frozen orange juice sat at the city’s port, held up by customs inspectors checking goods for the presence of the virus, said Joshua Lim, a general manager for the company in the city.</p> <p>Clearing customs and getting the juice shipments to warehouses, which usually takes three to four days, took two weeks, he said. Citrosuco bosses in Brazil began reassessing China’s prospects, he said.</p> <p>“They are asking questions like, how can we better protect our business?” he said. “If we invest now, what will the payback look like and what other risks will we be blindsided by?”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/11 Australia PM dismisses China demands
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/07/11/Anthony-Albanese-Wang-Yi-demands-bilateral-relationship/4741657532436/
GIST	<p>July 11 (UPI) -- Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese rejected a four-point plan from China to improve strained bilateral relations on Monday, saying that his country "doesn't respond to demands."</p> <p>His comments came after a call from Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi for Australia to "reshape a correct perception of China."</p> <p>Wang met his Australian counterpart Penny Wong on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Bali on Friday, and outlined four conditions for the countries to get back on track.</p> <p>"Stick to regarding China as a partner rather than a rival," Wang said, according to a readout from China's foreign ministry.</p> <p>His other demands included "not targeting any third party or being controlled by any party" and "building positive and pragmatic social foundations and public support."</p> <p>"We respond to our own national interest," Albanese told reporters Monday.</p> <p>Diplomatic relations between Beijing and Canberra soured in 2020 when the administration of then-Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison led international calls for further investigation into the origins of COVID-19. China restricted the import of Australian coal, barley, wine, beef and other products in response.</p> <p>Beijing also bristled at the Australian government's decision last year to join the United States and Britain in the AUKUS security pact amid growing military competition in the Asia-Pacific region. The agreement allows Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines and other advanced weaponry in a major upgrade for its defense forces.</p>

In recent years, Australia has accused China of interfering in its elections and launching cyberattacks against government agencies and public institutions.

Wang criticized Morrison's government for "regarding China as a rival or even a threat," and accused it of "a series of irresponsible words and deeds against China."

Communication lines between Beijing and Canberra have gradually opened up since the Albanese government was elected in May. Last week's meeting between the foreign ministers was the first exchange at that level since 2019.

"It was a constructive meeting. It was just a step forward," Albanese said Monday.

"I want to build good relations with all countries. But we will stand up for Australia's interests when we must."

Canberra has expressed concern over Beijing's growing military presence in the region, including a recent [security deal](#) with the Solomon Islands that has created fears China will gain a foothold in the tiny nation just 1,200 miles away from Australia.

Australia also complained about a Chinese [fighter jet harassing](#) its aircraft in international airspace last month.

At a NATO conference in Spain, Albanese sounded the alarm over China's assertive moves.

"China has been prepared to make sanctions not just against Australia, but to be more aggressive in its stance in the world," Albanese said.

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HEADLINE	07/11 California cities ban new gas stations
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-07-11/california-cities-ban-new-gas-stations-amid-climate-change
GIST	<p>Without realizing they were starting a movement in green energy policy, leaders of a small Sonoma Valley city seem to have done just that when they questioned the approval process for a new gas station — eventually halting its development and others in the future.</p> <p>“We didn’t know what we were doing, actually,” said Petaluma Councilwoman D’Lynda Fischer, who led the charge last year to prohibit new gas stations in the city of 60,000. “We didn’t know we were the first in the world when we banned gas stations.”</p> <p>Since Petaluma’s decision, four other cities in the Bay Area have followed suit, and now, leaders in California’s most car-centric metropolis are hoping to bring the climate-conscious policy to Southern California.</p> <p>It opens a new front in California’s efforts to reduce carbon emissions and already is generating opposition from the fuel industry, which argues consumers would suffer.</p> <p>“It’s really up to cities to turn around climate change,” said Andy Shrader, director of environmental affairs for Los Angeles City Councilman Paul Koretz, who proposed L.A. work toward its own ban on new gas stations. While the motion hasn’t gained traction, Shrader and other council leaders expect a hearing on the matter this summer.</p> <p>“L.A.’s enormous and damaging ecological footprint really helped set us on this path,” Shrader said at a recent conference about gas station prohibitions across California. “If you have lung cancer, you stop smoking; if your planet’s on fire, you stop pouring gasoline on it.”</p>

While Petaluma officials at the time called its new gas pump ban “completely uncontroversial,” it’s unclear how such a policy would go over in Los Angeles, a city with about 65 times as many people and a transportation infrastructure that still heavily relies on vehicles. Lobbyists for gas stations said they will oppose the motion in L.A. if it moves forward.

But Koretz said such a ban would better prepare the city for a future that doesn’t rely on fossil fuel-powered vehicles, which [California has pledged to stop selling by 2035](#).

“Given Gov. Newsom’s timeline to end the sale of gas vehicles by 2035, gas stations are a dying business,” Koretz said. “Their toxic chemicals take years and millions of dollars to clean up.”

[According to the Environmental Protection Agency](#), about half of the nation’s 450,000 brownfields — sites containing hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants — is property compromised by the presence or potential presence of petroleum, much of it leaking from old gas stations.

Koretz’s proposal — which calls on the city to continue “leading the way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution” — would task city officials to draft an ordinance to prohibit any new fossil-fuel pumps in the city and require that “any expansions of current gas stations to be limited to serving zero-emissions vehicles and providing non-fuel-related facilities.”

It would not affect any stations’ current operations.

“Taking the commonsense step of halting new stations and helping existing stations transform their business models ensures we are protecting our small-business owners and making sure the city doesn’t end up footing the bill to clean up a bunch of toxic stranded assets in the relatively near future,” Koretz said.

For some, like Karen Huh, who said she sees four gas stations at some intersections near her South L.A. home, the idea makes sense.

“I think we have enough, to be honest — more than enough,” the 28-year-old said while filling her tank on South Vermont Avenue. She also said, given current gas prices, she’s been researching buying an electric or hybrid car once she pays off her SUV in the next few months.

Troy Walker, 49, said he also would like to switch to an electric car, but their skyrocketing prices have put the idea on the back burner. Still, he said he’d have no qualms about the city banning new gas stations, especially given what he knows about climate change — which he learned about during a sustainability course.

“If people were more educated, they would be more aware and would oppose the new gas stations,” Walker said, filling up his tank at a recently opened 7-Eleven on West Century Boulevard, one of the few new stations permitted by L.A. in recent years.

From 2016 to summer 2021, Los Angeles approved permits for only one or two new gas stations a year, except in 2017, when three were approved, according to data provided to The Times by Koretz’s office. It wasn’t immediately clear whether any were permitted in the last year, as the city’s Department of Building and Safety did not immediately fulfill a records request for additional information.

“I’m concerned about the ozone layer for the future of my kids,” Walker said. “It’s definitely going to affect the younger generation.”

Brian Mullins, though, said he’d rather local officials focus on ramping up electric power infrastructure than halting new gas stations. He pointed out the pumps have a limited lifespan, which means they eventually need to be replaced.

“How long before you don’t have enough gas stations?” Mullins, 62, asked, while filling up at a station in Westchester.

Koretz's motion, which was seconded by Councilman Kevin de León, was introduced in May 2021 but tabled by the city's Planning and Land Use Management Committee in September without much discussion. City leaders now say they expect a full hearing in August.

Five neighborhood councils — Westside, Silver Lake, Los Feliz, Echo Park and North Westwood — submitted statements in support of the motion, at least three of which voted unanimously to support the proposal, city records show. Only one person addressed the idea during public comments in September, questioning why the city wouldn't "lead by example and convert the entire city's fleet to nonfossil fuel-burning before [officials] make life more difficult for everyone else in the city?"

At least one other nearby city — West Hollywood — is also considering restricting new gas stations. Its city council approved a directive in April 2021 for officials to evaluate the plan before developing a law. West Hollywood spokesperson Sheri Lunn said the proposal is set for subcommittee review, and if approvals continue, it could see a full council vote by the end of the year.

Los Angeles County had just over 2,000 gas stations in 2020, according to data from the California Energy Commission. The commission does not track city-level data.

In 2020, about 2,750 million gallons of gasoline were sold in L.A. County, according to commission data — about three times that of any other county in California. In 2019, before the pandemic affected travel and commutes, L.A. County gas sales totaled 3,600 million gallons, state data show.

As more cities consider the bans, the California Fuels & Convenience Alliance, which lobbies for gas station owners, will continue opposing the proposals, said Sam Bayless, the alliance's policy director. He mainly worries about how market limits could further increase gas prices and how an outright ban could affect a city's development.

"Not being able to serve the people who live there, who are commuting to work, picking up their kids from soccer practice ... is really a disservice to the people who are new to the area," Bayless said.

While he called the future of gas stations a complicated issue given the climate crisis, he said they are still an "essential service," as electric and other energy sources haven't filled the gap, especially for low- and middle-income Californians.

But opposition hasn't affected the movement's success for leaders in Rohnert Park and Sebastopol, both small cities in Sonoma Valley that passed new gas station bans, as well as neighboring cities American Canyon and Calistoga. Officials in other California cities, as well as in New York and British Columbia, have said they are developing similar legislation, motivated to limit reliance on fossil-fuel infrastructure.

"We cannot even think twice about the banning of the gas station," Rohnert Park Mayor Jackie Elward said. "Why would we want more fossil fuel pollutions with costly cleanup of more gas stations when we have enough, and California won't even have gas cars for sale by 2035?"

But Kevin Slagle, a spokesperson for Western States Petroleum Assn., which lobbies on behalf of oil and gas companies, said he worries how bans can have "unintended consequences."

Bans will just make it harder for consumers to find fuel, Slagle said. "Taking what we're facing today — a lot of demand and not a lot of supply — if you start taking stations out, new and existing, if you make a commodity tougher to find, that often means higher costs," he said.

Shrader said the idea that banning gas stations could affect fuel prices is "nonsense."

"Los Angeles is completely saturated with gas stations already, and a few more or less stations won't make any difference in overall price," he said.

	<p>Leaders with Stand.earth, an environmental advocacy group pushing the gas station bans, argue that air and soil pollution — which disproportionately affect low-income communities of color — as well as the difficult process to clean up abandoned pumps should be reason enough to prohibit new stations.</p> <p>“The real question now that’s coming up as we ban new gas stations: What do we do with our old gas station sites?” said Fischer, the Petaluma councilmember. “Because they’re going to take a lot to clean up. ... That’s the next wave of this: thinking about what’s to come.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/11 Russia targets Ukraine agriculture
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/11/europe/ukraine-harvest-battlefield-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) Across Ukraine, in the shimmering heat, one sight is becoming familiar this summer: Combine harvesters sweeping across fields of grain in a race against fast-spreading fires.</p> <p>The conflict's front lines straddle some of Ukraine's richest farmland. Whether caused by accident or intention, the fires darkening the summer sky are eating into a harvest that was always going to be tough to collect and even tougher to export.</p> <p>Pavlo Serhienko is in the crosshairs of this battle. The 24-year-old is the third generation of his family to run a farm in the Vasylivka district of Zaporizhzhia. Since his father died from coronavirus, Serhienko is managing the 3,000-hectare farm on his own.</p> <p>But nearly half the land is now too dangerous to cultivate, he told CNN on Saturday.</p> <p>"We can't even get there. It is either mined or near the occupied territories, literally the front line. We had occupiers on part of the fields."</p> <p>Serhienko has literally seen his family's business go up in smoke.</p> <p>"For the last four days, all our knees are covered in blood, we are extinguishing [fires in] the fields. They [the Russians] especially hit the fields -- fields with wheat and barley -- every day."</p> <p>He said in the past few days he had lost 30 hectares of wheat, and 55 hectares of barley. And "those 1,200 hectares I can't reach are also burning. But what can I do? I won't even go there."</p> <p>The sowing season was just as dangerous. "We sowed a field of 40 hectares. We had to leave the field four times to finish it. Every time we left, they shelled the place instantly. Once there were 23 mortar hits."</p> <p>His buildings and equipment have also been hit -- the animal farm and all the warehouses built over the past 20 years were destroyed.</p> <p>"The planter was crushed, the winter workshop, where we repair tractors and combines, was also smashed."</p> <p>There are hundreds of farmers in a similar plight. Many likely face bankruptcy.</p> <p>Targeted assaults</p> <p>Ukrainian officials are in no doubt that part of Russia's strategy is to destroy Ukraine's agricultural wealth. Last week, police in the southern Kherson region, one of Ukraine's most productive arable areas, opened criminal proceedings over "the purposeful destruction" of crops by the Russian military.</p> <p>The police accused Russian forces of "shelling agricultural land with incendiary shells. Large-scale fires occur every day, hundreds of hectares of wheat, barley and other grain crops have already burned."</p>

"In order to save at least part of the harvest, the villagers work on machinery next to a wall of fire," the police said.

Once the fires start, there is little chance of extinguishing them. Many contested areas are without piped water, and it's often too dangerous to try to tackle the blazes.

Kherson police allege that "the Russians deliberately do not allow anyone to extinguish the fires," citing a fire that burned 12 hectares and adjacent pine forests in the occupied area around the village of Rozlyv.

The active front lines in the conflict stretch for more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) -- mostly through farmland. In the Donetsk region, Pavlo Kyrylenko, head of the regional military administration, said that "the enemy began to use the tactic of destroying fields where the harvesting is ongoing."

Ukrainian emergency services posted images of fires that had swept through Donetsk farmland last week.

Ihor Lutsenko, a former member of Parliament now in the military, posted an image showing a substantial fire south of Bakhmut, an area of Donetsk that's under almost constant attack. "The fields are on fire here," Lutsenko told CNN last week. "We witnessed the Russians launch incendiary munitions. This is to burn out our positions."

The image was reposted by the Defense Ministry, which added: "It is not Ukrainian wheat that is on fire, it is the food security of the world that is on fire."

A little further west, the city council in Kramatorsk -- an area that is coming under increasing Russian fire -- also posted images of scorched fields, some with the remnants of Russian rockets still present. It said 35 hectares of crops had been destroyed in the latest fires.

Battle on multiple fronts

The summer harvest is just getting underway, so it's not yet possible to assess the overall damage caused by fires. On Friday, the Agriculture Ministry said farmers had gathered in the first million tons of grain of the 2022 season from just over 400,000 hectares -- but that represents just 3% of the sowing area.

Besides the fires, Ukrainian farmers face multiple challenges. Those close to the front lines must contend with the risk of harvesting and a lack of adequate storage. Dozens of silos and some of the biggest export terminals have been destroyed by Russian bombardment. One of the largest -- in the southern city of Mykolaiv -- contained some 250,000 tons of grain before being burned in June.

Additionally, some analysts say there are challenges in obtaining diesel fuel because of the destruction of refineries, meaning that some crops won't be harvested.

Wherever they are, farmers face a logistical nightmare in exporting their grain and oilseed because Black Sea ports are essentially sealed off. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization has launched an emergency \$17 million program to help overcome storage problems. The US has also pledged to assist with the erection of temporary silos in Poland, which borders Ukraine to the west.

Even before the fires, Ukraine had forecast a sharp drop in the harvest of grain and oilseed this year, compared to the record output of last year.

Last week, Ukraine's grain traders' union said it expected a grain and oilseed harvest of 69.4 million tons, marginally higher than previous forecasts but far below the 106 million tons harvested last year.

Agriculture Minister Taras Vysotskiy said the grain harvest could be at least 50 million tons, compared to 86 million tons in 2021. At least half that output is earmarked for export, according to the traders' union.

The production and export of wheat in an already tight global market may be most at risk. French consultancy Agritel said last week it expects Ukraine to harvest 21.8 million tons of wheat this summer compared to 32.2 million last year.

Consultant Dan Basse of the Chicago-based AgResource consultancy told the podcast AgriTalk late in June that because of logistical challenges he doubts Russian exports can make up for the shortfall of Ukrainian wheat, and the world market may be short of about 10 million tons of wheat this year.

After a recent dip, wheat prices are close to their highest levels for the year.

Some of what would have been Ukrainian produce is now in territory held by the Russians and their allies in the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DPR and LPR). The leader of the DPR, Denis Pushilin, said last week that the wheat harvest there would be much higher than in 2021.

Pushilin posted photographs of meetings with farmers and said they had discussed "the sale of products." He has also said that the DPR plans to use the port of Mariupol to export the harvest.

Agritel estimates that up to 3.7 million tons of wheat could be harvested from some southern and eastern regions under Russian control. Russian operators are going to great lengths to disguise the origins of the wheat in an effort to sell it abroad. They are [transferring grain at sea](#) in an apparent effort to disguise its origin, according to satellite imagery reviewed by CNN, and merchant ships are turning off their transponders.

What's unclear is whether Russian-backed authorities in occupied areas are paying market prices for the produce. Ukrainian officials have said that, in some areas, the Russians are insisting on steep discounts. There's anecdotal evidence that some Ukrainian farmers have preferred not to harvest at all.

'Cynical strategy'

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said last week that Russia had a "well-thought and cynical strategy" to destroy Ukraine's agriculture.

"The Russian naval blockade of Ukrainian ports has already shredded global chains of food supply," Kuleba said. "Adding insult to injury, Russia steals Ukrainian grain and bombs Ukrainian granaries."

"Russia is essentially playing hunger games with the world by keeping the naval blockade of Ukrainian ports with one hand and shifting the blame for it on Ukraine with the other hand," Kuleba added.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has accused Ukraine of causing the paralysis of merchant shipping by mining coastal waters. Negotiations on safe passage for merchant ships, brokered by Turkey, have yet to yield any progress.

It's not just this year's harvest that's in jeopardy. Independent farmers comprise much of the agriculture sector in Ukraine, and they don't have deep pockets.

Basse, of AgResource, told AgriTalk: "Financing is running out. I will tell you that as I talk to my friends and clients, we will have farmers that go bankrupt. And then of course, as that happens, we will really have issues with the next wheat crop and the next corn crop. So I'm actually more concerned about 2023 production than I am about 2022."

So is Serhienko, who says a combination of the ports closing, higher transport costs and lower prices mean "there is no question" his profit will vanish this year. He estimates his losses so far at some \$10 million, in terms of lost output and destroyed infrastructure, and doesn't know whether the family farm will survive into 2023.

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SOURCE	https://westseattleblog.com/2022/07/coronavirus-newest-numbers-for-west-seattle-king-county/
GIST	<p>Every Sunday, we check numbers from the Public Health – Seattle/King County dashboard for our weekly look at countywide and West Seattle-specific COVID numbers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *9 percent fewer cases countywide in the past week than the week before *Currently averaging 956 new daily cases countywide (down from 1,045 when we checked a week ago) *8 percent more hospitalizations countywide in the past week than the week before *Currently averaging 20 new hospitalizations daily (up from 17 a week ago) *18 percent more deaths countywide in the past two weeks than the two previous weeks (the dashboard doesn't offer a one-week increment) *Currently averaging 3 deaths daily (up from last week's two-week average of 2 daily) <p>For West Seattle, we have two-week comparisons (these are the combined totals from two "health reporting areas," labeled West Seattle and Delridge):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *781 cases between 6/20 and 7/4, up from 729 between 6/6 and 6/19 *18 hospitalizations between 6/20 and 7/4, up from 10 between 6/6 and 6/19 *One death between 6/20 and 7/4, same as between 6/6 and 6/19 <p>VACCINATION: As announced last month, the Western States review workgroup has affirmed that the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are safe and effective for children 6 months to 4 years old. Also, boosters are recommended for everyone 5 and up. Checking vaccination rates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *81.6 percent of all King County residents have completed the initial series (up .1% from a week ago) *86.4 percent of all King County residents ages 5 and up have completed the initial series (up .1% from a week ago) *51.2 percent of all King County residents have had the initial series plus a booster (up .3% from a week ago) *In West Seattle, here are the vaccination rates by ZIP code for ages 5 and up (reminder, 98106 and 98146 are not wholly within WS): <p>98106 – 88.8% completed initial series (up .1% from a week earlier), 55.3% have had a booster (up .1%)</p> <p>98116 – 93.5% completed initial series (unchanged from a week earlier), 67.6% have had a booster (up .2%)</p> <p>98126 – 84.2% completed initial series (up .1% from a week earlier), 57.4% have had a booster (up .2%)</p> <p>98136 – 94.3% completed initial series (up .1% from a week earlier), 70.6% have had a booster (up .2%)</p> <p>98146 – 83.6% completed initial series (up .1% from a week earlier), 49.7% have had a booster (up .1%)</p> <p>VACCINE CLINICS: New pediatric clinics were announced this week by Neighborhood Naturopathic (WSB sponsor) in West Seattle – check to see if appointments remain. Otherwise, look for opportunities here.</p> <p>TESTING: If you want to get tested and don't have or want to buy a home kit, public testing sites include the city-supported site at Nino Cantu Southwest Athletic Complex (2801 SW Thistle, 9 am-5:30 pm Monday-Saturday this week) and the Curative kiosk at Don Armeni Boat Ramp (1220 Harbor SW, 9 am-3 pm Monday-Friday this week). ... If you need to report self-test results, that's explained on this page.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/11 Russa gas pipeline planned shutdown
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/europe-edge-nord-stream-russian-gas-link-set-planned-shut-down-2022-07-10/
GIST	<p>LONDON/FRANKFURT, July 11 (Reuters) - The biggest single pipeline carrying Russian gas to Germany began annual maintenance on Monday, with flows expected to stop for 10 days, but governments, markets and companies are worried the shutdown might be extended because of the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>The Nord Stream 1 pipeline transports 55 billion cubic metres (bcm) a year of gas from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea. Maintenance lasts from July 11 to 21.</p>

Operator Nord Stream AG confirmed the shutdown started as planned at 0600 CET and that gas flows would drop to zero a few hours later.

Last month, Russia cut flows to 40% of the pipeline's total capacity, citing the delayed return of equipment being serviced by Germany's Siemens Energy ([ENR1n.DE](#)) in Canada.

Canada said at the weekend it would return a repaired turbine, but it also said it would expand sanctions against Russia's energy sector.

Europe fears Russia could extend scheduled maintenance to restrict European gas supply further, throwing plans to fill storage for winter into disarray and heightening a gas crisis that has prompted emergency measures from governments and painfully high bills for consumers.

German Economy Minister Robert Habeck has said the country should confront the possibility that Russia will suspend gas flows through Nord Stream 1 beyond the scheduled maintenance period.

"Based on the pattern we've seen, it would not be very surprising now if some small, technical detail is found and then they could say 'now we can't turn it on any more'," he said at an event at the end of June.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov dismissed claims that Russia was using oil and gas to exert political pressure, saying the maintenance shutdown was a regular, scheduled event and that no one was "inventing" any repairs.

There are other big pipelines from Russia to Europe, but flows have been declining gradually and Ukraine halted one gas transit route in May, blaming interference by occupying Russian forces.

Russia has cut off gas supplies to several European countries that did not comply with its demand for payment in roubles.

"The last few months have shown one thing: Putin knows no taboos. A complete halt to gas supplies through the Nord Stream pipeline cannot therefore be ruled out," said Timm Kehler, managing director of German industry association Zukunft Gas.

TURBINE TROUBLE

Germany at the weekend welcomed Canada's decision to issue a "time-limited and revocable permit" to allow equipment to be returned for the Nord Stream 1 pipeline.

But Ukraine's energy and foreign ministries said they were "deeply disappointed" and urged Canada to reverse a decision that they said amounted to adjusting the sanctions imposed on Moscow "to the whims of Russia".

Siemens Energy said it was working on further formal approvals and logistics to have the equipment in place as soon as possible.

Zongqiang Luo, gas analyst at consultancy Rystad Energy, said it was "not impossible" Gazprom could use any delay as a justification to extend the maintenance period.

In previous years the annual maintenance period on Nord Stream 1 has lasted about 10-12 days and has finished on time.

It is not uncommon for additional faults to be detected during routine maintenance at pipelines or gas infrastructure and operators can prolong outages if necessary.

While a complete halt of gas is considered unlikely, Gazprom has not been re-routing flows via other pipelines, meaning a prolonged reduced flow rate is probable, analysts at Goldman Sachs said.

ECONOMIC BLOW

Germany has moved to stage two of a three-tier emergency gas plan, which is one step before the government rations fuel consumption.

It has also warned of recession if Russian gas flows are halted. The blow to the economy could be 193 billion euros (\$195 billion) in the second half of this year, data from the vbw industry association of the state of Bavaria showed last month.

"The abrupt end of Russian gas imports would also have a significant impact on the workforce in Germany ... Around 5.6 million jobs would be affected by the consequences," said Bertram Brossardt, vbw's managing director.

The effects would be wider still. A complete halt would keep European gas prices higher for longer, having already stung industry and households.

Wholesale Dutch gas prices, the European benchmark, have risen more than 400% since last July.

"If Nord Stream gets cut off, or if Germany loses all its Russian imports, then the effect will be felt on the whole of north-western Europe," said Dutch energy minister Rob Jetten.

In an interview with Reuters on Thursday, he said the Dutch Groningen gas field could still be called upon to help neighbouring countries in the event of a complete cut off in Russian supplies, but ramping up production would risk causing earthquakes.

A halt of supply through Nord Stream 1 would hurt Russia as well as western Europe.

Russia's finance ministry had said in June that it expected to receive 393 billion roubles (\$6.4 billion) more oil and gas revenue than forecast in its budget planning.

For July it expects 259 billion roubles more than its budget plan projected.

Extended maintenance could also result in more Russian gas production shut-ins, relative to the 9% year-on-year decline in Gazprom production reported so far this year, Goldman Sachs said.

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HEADLINE	07/08 Recall: Ford SUVs
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/ford-expands-suv-recall-over-engine-fires/507-0c68981c-4e45-468d-86cb-a6fd2e593555
GIST	<p>DETROIT — Ford is expanding a recall of SUVs and telling owners to park them outside after a series of engine fires that can happen even when the ignition switches are off.</p> <p>The company also announced Friday that it is recalling another 100,000 SUVs in the U.S. for a different problem that also causes engine fires.</p> <p>In May Ford recalled about 39,000 Ford Expedition and Lincoln Navigator large SUVs in the U.S. and told owners to park them outdoors and away from buildings. On Friday the company expanded that recall to cover more than 66,000 vehicles from the 2021 model year after getting reports of five more fires.</p> <p>At the time of the first recall, Ford didn't know what was causing the fires. But on Friday the company said it has traced the cause to printed circuit boards that are susceptible to an electrical short. The company says it has reports of 21 fires and one injury, but no reports of fires extending to buildings.</p> <p>The circuit boards are part of the battery junction box. Dealers will check the box for melting damage and replace it if needed. They'll also remove or repair a cooling fan ground wire that connects to the junction box. Parts are expected to be available in early September.</p>

	<p>About one-third of the recalled SUVs can be fixed immediately by removing the ground wire, Ford said.</p> <p>The other recall covers certain 2020 through 2022 Ford Escape and Lincoln Corsair SUVs as well as some Ford Maverick small pickups. All have 2.5-liter hybrid or plug-in hybrid powertrains.</p> <p>Ford says if the engine fails, significant amounts of oil and fuel vapor can leak onto hot parts, causing a fire. The company says it has 23 reports worldwide of fires while the engines are on, but no injuries.</p> <p>Engines can fail due to a crankshaft machining problem. That problem has been fixed in production, but the recalled vehicles could have it.</p> <p>The recall repair doesn't address the engine failures. Ford said in a statement that engine failures are rare with 0.17 repairs per 1,000 vehicles.</p> <p>Dealers will add drain holes to an under-hood shield and change the active grille shutters to allow more air flow and reduce under-hood temperatures to below the ignition points of fuel vapor or engine oil.</p> <p>Owners will be notified starting Aug 8.</p> <p>Owners check to see if their vehicles are affected by going to https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls and typing in their 17-digit vehicle identification number.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/11 Lithuania widens block Kaliningrad trade
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/lithuania-expands-restrictions-kaliningrad-trade-2022-07-11/
GIST	<p>VILNIUS, July 11 (Reuters) - Lithuania on Monday expanded restrictions on trade through its territory to Russia's Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad, as phase-ins on earlier-announced European Union sanctions against Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine took effect.</p> <p>Additional goods barred from Monday morning include concrete, wood, alcohol and alcohol-based industrial chemicals, a spokesperson for Lithuanian customs said.</p> <p>Russia warned Lithuania and the European Union on Friday that it could adopt "harsh measures" against them if the transit of some goods to and from Kaliningrad did not resume "within the coming days".</p> <p>On Monday, the Kaliningrad regional governor proposed a total ban on overland movement of goods between Russia and the three EU Baltic member states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, to push them into using Kaliningrad ports.</p> <p>"This will provide activities to (our) maritime carriers and give work to Kaliningrad ports, which have been hit hard by the EU restrictions," Governor Anton Alikhanov said.</p> <p>The EU trade restrictions have been upgraded as governments, markets and companies worry Russia could choose to extend the shut-off of the biggest single pipeline carrying Russian gas to Germany beyond a planned 10-day maintenance period.</p> <p>TEST OF RESOLVE</p> <p>Kaliningrad borders on NATO and EU member states Lithuania and Poland and relies on railways and roads through Lithuania for most goods. The coastal territory has been cut off from some freight transport from mainland Russia since June 17 under the EU sanctions regime.</p> <p>Goods that fall within humanitarian or essential categories, such as food, are exempted from the sanctions.</p>

	<p>The dispute over the isolation of Kaliningrad is testing Europe's resolve to enforce the sanctions amid fears of an escalating confrontation with Russia after other restrictions pushed Moscow to default on its debt.</p> <p>EU officials, with Germany's backing, sought in late June a swift compromise to resolve the stand-off. However sources told Reuters that Lithuania, once ruled from Moscow within the old Soviet Union, had serious reservations about making what could be seen as a concession to the Kremlin.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Ukraine minister: more long-range rockets
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/ukraine-long-range-military-aid-russia/2022/07/10/id/1078155/
GIST	<p>Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov said his country has "passed the test" and successfully used recently delivered American long-range guided rockets. However, he said, the loss of able-bodied soldiers on the frontlines has made the demand for more long-range systems, drones and armored vehicles more pressing.</p> <p>As the war shifts into primarily an artillery battle, the need for more long-range weapons will outpace the demand for shorter-range systems; more will be needed if Ukraine is to recapture territory lost to Russia, Reznikov told The Wall Street Journal.</p> <p>"We need to refresh our platoons and change them and make replacements also because we also have a lot of losses," Reznikov added. "We are waiting for more armor, more weaponry from our partners. We need to rebuild some directions and to refresh our fortifications and plan a new operational strategy."</p> <p>The Ukrainian defense minister highlighted the American-issued M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or long-range guided rocket launchers nicknamed Himars, have been a "game changer," allowing Ukraine to strike Russian forces situated in the northeastern town of Izyum. But, he noted, "The war is grim... We need more. We need it quickly."</p> <p>Washington said it would issue four Himars to Ukraine despite earlier hesitation and concerns that the United States would be drawn into the conflict if the systems were used to target Russian territory. The systems are mobile launchers capable of hitting targets 60 to 500 kilometers away, depending on the type of rocket used.</p> <p>Russian officials have criticized the United States' decision to supply the Himars, warning if Ukraine attacked Russian territory, it would be the equivalent of pouring gasoline on a fire.</p> <p>Ukrainian and U.S. officials also noted that Ukraine used U.S.-supplied Harpoon missiles to strike a Russian supply ship in the Black Sea, which was key in Ukrainian forces' effort to recapture the strategic Snake Island.</p> <p>"We needed to persuade them," Reznikov said, "to show them proof. In the Izyum case, we were precise [in targeting] a Russian command center for aerial operations. It was really precise. Our partners saw it and said, 'You passed the test.'"</p> <p>In July, the Pentagon announced \$820 million in new military aid to Ukraine, which would include "mid-to long-range air-defense systems and counter-artillery radars to respond to Russia's heavy use of long-range strikes in the war."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Texas gov. calls migrant flow an 'invasion'
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/politics/abbott-migrants-southern-border-invasion/2022/07/10/id/1078127/
GIST	<p>Texas GOP Gov. Greg Abbott on Sunday called the massive flow of migrants across the U.S. border an "invasion," defending his executive order that allows Texas law enforcement officials to send them back to Mexico.</p>

In an interview on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures," Abbott said the influx is driven by drugs and human trafficking cartels.

"The United Nations declared the border between Texas or the United States and Mexico to be the worst death border and most dangerous border in the entire world," Abbott said.

"We know about 42 terrorists who have been apprehended coming across the border, that's not counting the got-aways, and then there's the fentanyl coming across the border," the governor added. "So, yes, we do have an invasion driven by the cartels coming across our border that are pouring people into our country at unprecedented levels."

According to Abbott, there's also a "technical reason" for defining the influx as an invasion contained in the Constitution.

"There are two parts of the U.S. Constitution," he said.

"In that executive order that I issued this past week, I referenced both of those, plus I reference a provision of the Texas constitution that also uses the word invasion," he said. "The purpose of using those words is it triggers certain additional ways and strategies that states can use their powers to try to protect against actions such as those that are driven by the cartels."

Abbott also predicted a "red wave" would dominate voting results in November in traditionally Democratic counties along the southern border.

"This is going to be a massive of red wave along the border," he said. "The border counties and the border districts have historically always been Democrat. The one that [Mayra Flores won](#) was always held by a Democrat, it's now held by a Republican."

"We will see other Republican victories along the border," he asserted, "because so many people on the border are so angry about the Biden administration's approach to the open border policy."

Abbott also blasted the Supreme Court decision that upheld the Biden administration's decision to end the Trump "remain in Mexico" policy.

"[The Biden administration... predicted that after the elimination of these policies, we should have about 18,000 people coming across the border illegally per day," Abbott said. "Extrapolate that for an annual basis, you're going to have more than 6 million people coming across the border a year. ... This is outrageous, and the reason Americans are so angry about the Biden administration's approach to the border."

He also took aim at Democrat Beto O'Rourke's endorsement by the president of Mexico over Abbott for the gubernatorial race in the state.

"All of these illegal immigrants coming from Mexico into Texas, they are allowed into Mexico by President Lopez Obrador. And they're coming from countries across the entire world," he said.

"Can you imagine anything worse in the United States of America than having Lopez Obrador working with [President Joe] Biden and O'Rourke with the open door border policies? My fellow Americans, it would be a crushing disaster from which we may never recover from ... It would destroy our country."

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HEADLINE	07/10 China crushes bank depositors protest
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/10/china/china-henan-bank-depositors-protest-mic-intl-hnk/index.html

Hong Kong (CNN) Chinese authorities on Sunday violently dispersed a peaceful protest by hundreds of depositors, who sought in vain to demand their life savings back from banks that have run into a deepening cash crisis.

Since April, four rural banks in China's central Henan province have [frozen millions of dollars worth of deposits](#), threatening the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of customers in an economy already battered by draconian Covid lockdowns.

Anguished depositors have staged several demonstrations in the city of Zhengzhou, the provincial capital of Henan, over the past two months, but their demands have invariably fallen on deaf ears.

On Sunday, more than 1,000 depositors from across China gathered outside the Zhengzhou branch of the country's central bank, the People's Bank of China, to launch their largest protest yet, more than half a dozen protesters told CNN.

The demonstration is among the largest China has seen since the pandemic, with domestic travel limited by various Covid restrictions on movement. Last month, Zhengzhou authorities even resorted to [tampering](#) with the country's digital Covid health-code system to restrict the movements of depositors and thwart their planned protest, sparking a nationwide outcry.

This time, most protesters arrived outside the bank before dawn -- some as early as 4 a.m. -- to avoid being intercepted by authorities. The crowd, which included the elderly and children, occupied a flight of imposing stairs outside the bank, chanting slogans and holding up banners.

"Henan banks, return my savings!" they shouted in unison, many waving Chinese flags, in videos shared with CNN by two protesters.

Using national flags to display patriotism is a common strategy for protesters in China, where dissent is strictly suppressed. The tactic is meant to show that their grievances are only against local governments, and that they support and rely on the central government to seek redress.

"Against the corruption and violence of the Henan government," a banner written in English read.

A large portrait of late Chinese leader Mao Zedong was pasted on a pillar at the entrance of the bank. Across the street, hundreds of police and security personnel -- some in uniforms and others in plain clothes -- assembled and surrounded the site, as protesters shouted "gangsters" at them.

Violent crackdown

The face-off lasted for several hours until after 11 a.m., when rows of security officers suddenly charged up the stairs and clashed with protesters, who threw bottles and other small objects at them.

The scene quickly descended into chaos, as security officers dragged protesters down the stairs and beat those who resisted, including women and the elderly, according to witnesses and social media videos.

One woman from eastern Shandong province told CNN she was pushed to the ground by two security guards, who twisted and injured her arm. A 27-year-old man from the southern city of Shenzhen, surnamed Sun, said he was kicked by seven or eight guards on the ground before being carried away. A 45-year-old man from the central city of Wuhan said his shirt was completely torn at the back during the scuffle.

Many said they were shocked by the sudden burst of violence by the security forces.

"I did not expect them to be so violent and shameless this time. There was no communication, no warning before they brutally dispersed us," said one depositor from a metropolis outside Henan who had protested in Zhengzhou previously, and who requested CNN conceal his name due to security concerns.

"Why would government employees beat us up? We're only ordinary people asking for our deposits back, we did nothing wrong," the Shandong woman said.

The protesters were hurled onto dozens of buses and sent to makeshift detention sites across the city -- from hotels and schools to factories, according to people taken there. Some injured were escorted to hospitals; many were released from detention by the late afternoon, the people said.

CNN has reached out to the Henan provincial government for comment.

The Zhengzhou Business District Police Station -- which has jurisdiction over the protest site -- hung up on CNN's call requesting comment.

Late on Sunday night, the Henan banking regulator issued a terse statement, saying "relevant departments" were speeding up efforts to verify information on customer funds at the four rural banks.

"(Authorities) are coming up with a plan to deal with the issue, which will be announced in the near future," the statement said.

Police in Xuchang, a city neighboring Zhengzhou, said in a statement late Sunday they recently arrested members of an alleged "criminal gang," who were accused of effectively taking control over the Henan rural banks starting from 2011 -- by leveraging their shareholdings and "manipulating banks executives."

The suspects were also accused of illegally transferring funds through fictitious loans, the police said, adding that some of their funds and assets had been seized and frozen.

Shattered lives

The protest comes at a politically sensitive time for the ruling Communist Party, just months before its leader Xi Jinping is expected to seek an unprecedented third term at a key meeting this fall.

Large-scale demonstrations over lost savings and ruined livelihoods could be perceived as a political embarrassment for Xi, who has promoted a nationalistic vision of leading the country to "great rejuvenation."

Henan authorities are under tremendous pressure to stop the protests. But depositors remain undeterred. As the issue drags on, many have become ever more desperate to recover their savings.

Huang, the depositor from Wuhan, lost his job in the medical cosmetology industry this year, as businesses struggled in the pandemic. Yet he is unable to withdraw any of his life savings -- of over 500,000 yuan (\$75,000) -- from a rural bank in Henan.

"Being unemployed, all I can live on is my past savings. But I can't even do that now -- how am I supposed to (support my family)?" said Huang, whose son is in high school.

Sun, from Shenzhen, is struggling to keep his machine factory from bankruptcy after losing his deposit of 4 million yuan (\$597,000) to a Henan bank. He can't even pay his more than 40 employees without the funds.

Sun said he was covered in bruises and had a swollen lower back after being repeatedly stomped by security guards at the protest.

"The incident completely overturned my perception of the government. I've lived all my life placing so much faith in the government. After today, I'll never trust it again," he said.

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HEADLINE	07/11 UN: global population to reach 8B this year
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/global-population-to-hit-8-billion-in-2022-un-says/

<p>GIST</p>	<p><i>United Nations</i> — The world's population is expected to reach eight billion on November 15, the United Nations forecast Monday in a report that said India will surpass China as the most populous country on earth in 2023. That overall population milestone "is a reminder of our shared responsibility to care for our planet and a moment to reflect on where we still fall short of our commitments to one another," Secretary General Antonio Guterres said, without citing specifics.</p> <p>"This is an occasion to celebrate our diversity, recognize our common humanity, and marvel at advancements in health that have extended lifespans and dramatically reduced maternal and child mortality rates," he added.</p> <p>The forecast by the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs said the world's population is growing at its slowest pace since 1950.</p> <p>It should hit 8.5 billion in 2030 and 9.7 billion in 2050, peaking at around 10.4 billion people in the 2080s before steadying at that level until 2100.</p> <p>While a net drop in birth rates is observed in several developing countries, more than half of the rise forecast in the world's population in the coming decades will be concentrated in eight countries, the report said.</p> <p>It said they are the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and Tanzania.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>07/10 New subvariant concern: India and beyond</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/coronavirus-mutant-raises-concerns-india-86582692</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>The quickly changing coronavirus has spawned yet another super contagious omicron mutant that's worrying scientists as it gains ground in India and pops up in numerous other countries, including the United States.</p> <p>Scientists say the variant – called BA.2.75 – may be able to spread rapidly and get around immunity from vaccines and previous infection. It's unclear whether it could cause more serious disease than other omicron variants, including the globally prominent BA.5.</p> <p>"It's still really early on for us to draw too many conclusions," said Matthew Binnicker, director of clinical virology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. "But it does look like, especially in India, the rates of transmission are showing kind of that exponential increase." Whether it will outcompete BA.5, he said, is yet to be determined.</p> <p>Still, the fact that it has already been detected in many parts of the world even with lower levels of viral surveillance "is an early indication it is spreading," said Shishi Luo, head of infectious diseases for Helix, a company that supplies viral sequencing information to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>The latest mutant has been spotted in several distant states in India, and appears to be spreading faster than other variants there, said Lipi Thukral, a scientist at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology in New Delhi. It's also been detected in about 10 other countries, including Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and Canada. Two cases were recently identified on the West Coast of the U.S., and Helix identified a third U.S. case last week.</p> <p>Fueling experts' concerns are a large number of mutations separating this new variant from omicron predecessors. Some of those mutations are in areas that relate to the spike protein and could allow the virus to bind onto cells more efficiently, Binnicker said.</p>

	<p>Another concern is that the genetic tweaks may make it easier for the virus to skirt past antibodies — protective proteins made by the body in response to a vaccine or infection from an earlier variant.</p> <p>But experts say vaccines and boosters are still the best defense against severe COVID-19. In the fall it's likely the U.S. will see updated formulations of the vaccine being developed that target more recent omicron strains.</p> <p>“Some may say, ‘Well, vaccination and boosting hasn’t prevented people from getting infected.’ And, yes, that is true,” he said. “But what we have seen is that the rates of people ending up in the hospital and dying have significantly decreased. As more people have been vaccinated, boosted or naturally infected, we are starting to see the background levels of immunity worldwide creep up.”</p> <p>It may take several weeks to get a sense of whether the latest omicron mutant may affect the trajectory of the pandemic. Meanwhile Dr. Gagandeep Kang, who studies viruses at India’s Christian Medical College in Vellore, said the growing concern over the variant underlines the need for more sustained efforts to track and trace viruses that combine genetic efforts with real world information about who is getting sick and how badly. “It is important that surveillance isn’t a start-stop strategy,” she said.</p> <p>Luo said BA.2.75 is another reminder that the coronavirus is continually evolving – and spreading.</p> <p>“We would like to return to pre-pandemic life, but we still need to be careful,” she said. “ We need to accept that we’re now living with a higher level of risk than we used to.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Spokane airport terminal expansion project
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/spokane-international-airport-terminal-expansion-project-moving-forward/
GIST	<p>Spokane International Airport officials are moving forward on an expansion project to meet growing demand for air travel in the region.</p> <p>At a news conference held at the airport Wednesday, U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell highlighted the need for a federal grant to fund the expansion and renovation of the terminal.</p> <p>“We know very well that companies like to locate close to airports. It helps cut down on costs and allows them to reach markets,” Cantwell said. “So the terminal renovation and expansion project, known as TREX, will allow the airport to accommodate growing passenger traffic and enlarge the economic opportunities for this area.”</p> <p>The airport submitted a \$65 million grant request to pay for the project with Cantwell’s backing. The money would come from last year’s bipartisan infrastructure law.</p> <p>Airport officials anticipate breaking ground in August on the first phase of the expansion project, which is estimated to cost \$150 million. It would add 144,000 square feet and three gates to Terminal C and expand the ticketing area, upgrade the building’s HVAC system and consolidate the baggage system.</p> <p>Spokane International Airport CEO Larry Krauter said the expansion would be the first significant terminal renovation and expansion project to occur at the airport in more than 23 years.</p> <p>The airport is nearing its pre-pandemic level of more than 4 million passengers, and the expansion will provide much needed space to accommodate future growth, Krauter said.</p> <p>The project also calls for ADA-accessible improvements; companion care and nursing mother spaces; pet relief areas; and new concession, food and beverage options.</p>

“Increasing our airport’s capacity and better connecting Spokane air travel to new markets will allow for the Spokane economy to better engage with other metro areas, growing tourism and business market developments and relocation,” said Mark Mattke, CEO of the Spokane Workforce Council. “And the TREX project will support our economic expansion efforts and result in increased prosperity for Eastern Washington.”

Phase 1 of the project is slated to be complete in 2025. Subsequent phases of TREX are dependent upon future availability of grant dollars.

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HEADLINE	07/10 Sri Lanka protests reach a crescendo
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/article/sri-lanka-president-protests.html
GIST	<p>Months of protests in Sri Lanka reached a crescendo on Saturday when demonstrators stormed into the official residence of the president and the private home of the prime minister. The protesters say the leaders are responsible for the corruption and mismanagement that led to the collapse of the economy.</p> <p>Here’s what we know so far.</p> <p>Severe fuel shortages and economic hardship fomented protests.</p> <p>For months, daily life in Sri Lanka has been upended by a fuel shortage. The prices of food and medicine have soared, power cuts have become the norm and public transportation is often shut to shore up fuel supplies.</p> <p>Protesters had taken to the streets before, but frustration with these conditions and with the people seen as putting the country in dire financial straits came to a head with demonstrators pulling off a mostly peaceful takeover of the presidential residence.</p> <p>The coronavirus pandemic is partly to blame. It deprived the country of overseas tourists and crucial foreign currency that it needs to import fuel and medicine. Government mismanagement and a cratering currency only exacerbated the shortage.</p> <p>The downward spiral was hastened by the war in Ukraine, which added more supply-chain problems across the globe. In April, the government suspended payments on its international debt.</p> <p>More than a quarter of Sri Lanka’s nearly 22 million people are at risk of food shortages, the United Nations said last month. The country needs \$6 billion through the end of the year to buy fuel and other essential goods but the question is where that money will come from.</p> <p>In Sri Lanka, government had become a family affair.</p> <p>The Rajapaksa family has dominated Sri Lanka’s politics for much of the past two decades, and in recent years, it has increasingly run the island nation’s government as a family business.</p> <p>D.A. Rajapaksa, the family patriarch, was a lawmaker in the 1950s and ’60s. But it was Mahinda Rajapaksa, his son, who helped cement the family’s ascent to prominence, rising to become prime minister and then president for two terms from 2005 to 2015.</p> <p>The Rajapaksas were briefly out of the government after losing in the 2015 elections, but they returned to power with Gotabaya Rajapaksa as their presidential candidate in 2019.</p> <p>Soon after, he brought his elder brother, Mahinda Rajapaksa, back to the government as prime minister and handed key positions to several other members of the family. As the country’s economy appeared to be headed for a crash, he made his brother Basil Rajapaksa the minister of finance last July.</p> <p>In the face of intensifying protests, President Rajapaksa forced the family members in April to give up their seats in the government.</p>

The president has said he will give up his post, according to the speaker of Parliament who is also an ally of the president.

What happens next?

Sri Lanka's Constitution clearly defines a line of succession, but whoever takes the reins will need to revamp the political system under the watch of an impatient, weary public.

In more ordinary circumstances, the prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, would become the acting president, now that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is said to be negotiating an exit. But on Saturday, Mr. Wickremesinghe — who many believed had been gearing for just that possibility — announced his intention to resign as well.

The next likely candidate as interim president is Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena, the 76-year-old speaker of Parliament and a close ally of the Rajapaksa family.

The acting president will have a month to organize the election of a president from among members of Parliament. The winner will complete the two years left in Rajapaksa's term before elections are due.

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HEADLINE	07/10 US security assistance to Ukraine at \$8B
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/10/pentagons-own-supply-military-aid-going-ukraine-wo/
GIST	<p>The United States is again dipping into its own supply of military hardware to ship \$400 million worth of security assistance to Ukraine for its war against Russian invaders.</p> <p>It is the 15th U.S. drawdown of weapons and other military hardware for sending to Kyiv since August 2021.</p> <p>The U.S. has committed about \$8 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the start of the Biden administration, Pentagon officials said Friday when they announced the latest aid package.</p> <p>So far, the U.S. has provided Ukraine with 12 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and ammo; 126 155mm M-777 howitzers and more than 400,000 rounds; 20 Soviet-era Mi-17 helicopters; more than 6,500 Javelin anti-armor missiles; and more than 700 Switchblade tactical unmanned aerial systems.</p> <p>Also included in the total assistance package are 75,000 sets of body armor and helmets; thousands of night-vision goggles; maintenance equipment and spare parts; and tactical communications gear.</p> <p>A military analyst with Defense Priorities think tank said merely shipping billions of dollars of equipment to a war zone is not a strategy.</p> <p>“How does that tie into what the Ukraine military’s plans are? What is the end result of this? What are the expected consequences of this?” said retired Army Lt. Col. Daniel L. Davis, a senior fellow with the libertarian-leaning think tank. “I can tell you that there are no answers to this. When you look at the cumulative total of all of it, it’s not a fraction of what Ukraine needs.”</p> <p>At best, the haul of weapons removed from Pentagon supply depots might slow down Russia’s advance into Ukraine, Mr. Davis said.</p> <p>“In no case is it enough to turn the tide or even allow Ukraine to reach parity. Until you reach parity you can’t even get to the topic of a stalemate,” he said.</p>

While everything the U.S. has shipped to Ukraine so far comes straight from the Pentagon's own supply, a senior Defense Department official on Friday said the drawdowns are sustainable and won't hurt U.S. military readiness.

"The process of deciding which systems (to ship) and the numbers of systems is absolutely validated to ensure that these are sustainable capabilities that we can donate to Ukraine and will not have a negative impact on U.S. readiness," the Defense Department official told reporters at the Pentagon.

But Lt. Col. Davis said Ukraine's military supply system is "completely broken."

"There's no sustainability (and) no routine delivery of anything," he said. The war supplies "are not getting to the front. That's why Ukraine just methodically gets pushed back further and further."

U.S. lawmakers want to create a new government watchdog to monitor the billions of dollars in security assistance now being shipped to Ukraine in the wake of Russia's invasion more than four months ago.

Sen. Mike Lee, Utah Republican, said that while the Kremlin's aggression against its smaller neighbor was indefensible and the U.S. government should counter it, he is concerned about the spending discretion delegated to the White House and Biden administration officials.

"We must always make sure Congress maintains its constitutional role of directing engagement in conflict and ensure that we are not spending unnecessary funds while in a time of historic inflation and ballooning national debt," Mr. Lee said in a statement.

Sen. John Kennedy, Louisiana Republican, introduced a bill that would establish a special inspector general for Ukraine to oversee the humanitarian, economic, and security assistance funding provided by the U.S. government.

"Congress has already supported [Ukraine] with billions and billions of dollars in aid and military equipment," Mr. Kennedy said. "America's taxpayers deserve to know that their money is helping Ukraine beat back Russia effectively, and Congress needs to guarantee that oversight."

Continuing to support Ukraine at the same pace for an extended period is expensive but arguably worthwhile given the importance of both weakening Russia and supporting a nascent democracy like Ukraine, said retired Marine Col. Mark Cancian, a senior adviser with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The vast majority of the M-777 howitzers now earmarked for Ukraine have come from U.S. Marine Corps supply depots. The drawdown should pose little problem for the Corps because most of its artillery units are being eliminated as part of the plan by Gen. David H. Berger, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Col. Cancian said.

"In storage, we still have the older version of the howitzer - the M-198," he said. "It's a perfectly good howitzer. It's just not 'top of the line.'"

The amount of military hardware sent to Ukraine pales in comparison to the \$2 trillion that was spent in Afghanistan propping up a government in Kabul that collapsed in days once the U.S. military support dried up.

"There's really no question that we can continue to supply Ukraine. The NATO ammunition is essentially unlimited," Col. Cancian said.

But the U.S. might have reached its limit in the number of Javelin anti-armor systems it can supply Ukraine.

	<p>“We’re at the number of what we can send them without taking too much risk in our own war plans,” Mr. Cancian said.</p> <p>But there are still likely to be adequate supplies of other anti-tank weapons, such as the French-German MILAN or the U.S.-built M-47 Dragon, which was phased out in 2001 in favor of the Javelin, he said.</p> <p>While European governments have been supportive of the NATO-led mission to back Ukraine’s defense following Russia’s invasion, polls show populations are more ambivalent.</p> <p>The Biden administration says it is ready to support Kyiv for as long as it takes but the backing from the public can quickly disappear, Col. Cancian said.</p> <p>“We’ve been sending a lot of equipment and we’re in the process of sending a lot of financial aid,” he said. “Ukraine is still a very inefficient, corrupt country. If people start seeing evidence of corruption - oligarchs buying yachts with American money - that would undermine support.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/11 Day 138 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/11/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-138-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 15 people were killed and dozens injured after a Russian missile attack hit a five-storey apartment building in the town of Chasiv Yar in eastern Ukraine. Emergency crews worked to pull people trapped in the rubble. The strike destroyed three buildings in a residential quarter of town, inhabited mostly by people who work in nearby factories. • Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, accused Moscow of purposely targeting civilians in the Chasiv Yar attack and promised “punishment is inevitable for every Russian murderer”. • Ukraine has warned residents in southern Kherson and Zaporizhzhia to evacuate as it prepares to launch a counteroffensive to retake the area. The Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions were occupied by Russian troops in late February after they crossed the bridge from Russia-annexed Crimea. Ukraine’s deputy prime minister, Iryna Vereshchuk, said: “It’s clear there will be fighting, there will be artillery shelling ... and we therefore urge [people] to evacuate urgently.” • Two civilians were killed and at least two others injured in Russian missile attacks on the town of Siversk, near Sievierodonetsk, officials said. The Donetsk governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko, said three people were hurt by shelling in Soledar and seven houses and other property burned down in Bakhmut, giving no details of any casualties. Ukraine officials warned last week the city in the Luhansk region was facing a “humanitarian disaster”. • Russian forces have likely made some small territorial advances around Popasna, according to British intelligence. The Russian military continues to strike the Slovyansk area of the Donbas from around Izium to the north and near Lysychansk to the east, the UK’s Ministry of Defence said. The report added that the E40 – which links Donetsk and Kharkiv – is likely to be an important objective for Russian forces. • Canada will return a repaired Russian turbine to Germany that it needs for the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline, despite objections from Ukraine. Canada’s minister of natural resources, Jonathan Wilkinson, said the government was issuing a “time-limited and revocable permit” to exempt the return of turbines from its Russian sanctions, to support “Europe’s ability to access reliable and affordable energy as they continue to transition away from Russian oil and gas”. Ukraine responded saying it is “deeply disappointed” by the decision. • The number of Ukrainian children enrolled in Poland’s schools is expected to double to at least 400,000 for the coming school year, the country’s education department has said. A report in European Pravda, an online media outlet published by Ukrainian journalists, quoted Przemysław Czarnek, Poland’s education minister, as saying those enrolled would take part in lessons both online from Ukraine and in-person.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Germany has reportedly blocked €9bn of EU aid to Ukraine for more than a month. The Kyiv Independent, citing the Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera, said Germany's finance minister, Christian Lindner, was against the planned aid because of concerns over European debt. • The Russian Tennis Federation has claimed Elena Rybakina as “our product” on her run to the women's title at Wimbledon. They praised her training program in the country after she became Wimbledon champion on Saturday while representing Kazakhstan. • Russia has restricted access to the website of Germany's Die Welt newspaper, Reuters reports. This came at the request of prosecutors, according to Roskomnadzor, Russia's communications regulator. It was not immediately clear why prosecutors asked for the restriction. • A Scottish council has announced plans to bring up to 200 empty homes back into use to house refugees fleeing Ukraine. North Lanarkshire Council said it would use £5m of Scottish government funding to reinstate the homes in high rise towers in Coatbridge and Wishaw “to a high standard”, according to a report from PA Media.
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HEADLINE	07/11 Ukraine: Russia strikes apartment bldgs.
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/11/russia-ukraine-war-putin-news-live-updates/
GIST	<p>Ukrainian officials expect the death toll from an attack in the eastern city of Chasiv Yar to rise, as two dozen people remain trapped under the rubble of two high-rise apartment buildings they say were struck by Russian missiles. Six people have been pulled out of the rubble alive, and 18 people have died.</p> <p>“Unfortunately, this is not the final number,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in remarks Sunday evening, promising to find and punish those responsible. Russia carried out dozens of airstrikes across the country this weekend, Ukrainian officials said, with an intensifying focus on the Donetsk region, whose governor called the attacks “true hell.”</p> <p>Meanwhile, France's finance minister is warning that Europe should be prepared for the Kremlin to completely shut off gas shipments to Europe as tensions escalate over sanctions and energy. Bruno Le Maire said Sunday that it would be “totally irresponsible to ignore” the possibility of further cuts. “Let's prepare for a total cutoff of Russian gas,” he said. “Today that is the most likely option.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/11 China battles BA.5 outbreaks; lockdowns?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/11/shanghai-lockdown-china-covid-omicron/
GIST	<p>The arrival of the BA.5 coronavirus variant in China is threatening economically damaging lockdowns across the country, including in Shanghai, where many residents only recently emerged from a grueling two months of confinement in their homes.</p> <p>Over the weekend, the country's most populous city confirmed that the increasingly dominant subvariant of omicron had arrived only weeks after officials declared victory against the coronavirus following a citywide lockdown.</p> <p>Even though total numbers of infections in China remain low compared with many other countries — the National Health Commission on Monday reported 352 locally transmitted cases — Beijing remains deeply concerned that the highly transmissible subvariant's arrival will lead to a mass outbreak and a wave of deaths, especially among the under-vaccinated elderly population.</p> <p>Shanghai authorities quickly tried to ease fears of a return to April and May, when the city's reputation as a smoothly run international financial hub was shattered by China's most disruptive coronavirus restrictions since the initial outbreak in Wuhan.</p> <p>In response to questions about whether another large-scale lockdown was imminent, the government said on the social media app WeChat that the plan was merely to conduct PCR tests for all residents in nine of the city's 16 districts.</p>

While only one street had been designated high risk, 37 were deemed medium risk on Monday, meaning residents are not allowed to leave their homes.

On the microblog Weibo, many noted that Shanghai officials had made similar denials about a wider lockdown in March. “Originally I half believed them. As soon as there was a denial, I rushed to stock up on goods,” read a comment that received more than 10,000 likes.

Growing concern from residents has clashed with continued upbeat messaging from propagandists. On Friday, the local government launched a month-long campaign to collect pictures, videos and objects to tell a “heartwarming” story of the city’s lockdown, according to the Shanghai edition of Wen Wei Po, a Hong Kong-based state-run outlet.

During the last lockdown, buying groceries or securing basic medical care became a daily struggle for the city’s 25 million residents. Calls to [mental health](#) hotlines tripled. For many, the trauma was worsened by constantly shifting goals from the authorities, creating deep uncertainty about when restrictions would end.

Last month, in the clearest indication yet of where priorities lie, Chinese President Xi Jinping called the likely consequences of a shift in coronavirus policy “unthinkably” bad.

Implementing a “dynamic zero covid policy” is still best suited to China’s national circumstances, he [said](#), and protects the overall security and health of the masses “even if it temporarily somewhat impacts economic growth.”

At the same time, Xi ordered that healthy economic performance should be maintained “as much as possible,” leaving local officials with a tricky balancing act.

Economic activity indicators plunged during strict lockdowns, and the unemployment rate for 16-to-24-year-olds hit a record of 18.4 percent in May, leading to emergency meetings headed by Premier Li Keqiang in which he urged officials to do more. The government has also begun to gradually tweak coronavirus policy, including reducing quarantine requirements for international arrivals from 14 to seven days in a government-run facility.

But even with renewed stimulus, many analysts doubt that China can hit its yearly economic target of 5.5 percent growth in gross domestic product, especially as the arrival of BA.5 has led cities across China to toughen coronavirus controls once again.

Macao, the former Portuguese colony and leading Asian gambling destination, [announced](#) Monday it was closing its casinos for a week, marking the first time in more than two years it had adopted such strict measures, to stem an outbreak of more than 1,500 confirmed infections.

A similar ratcheting up of restrictions is taking place across China, with cities including Hangzhou, Hefei and Nanchang increasing the frequency of mandatory PCR testing. Starting at midnight Sunday, the northern city of Lanzhou imposed week-long “temporary control measures,” closing most businesses and public spaces after it reported just over two dozen cases.

The spread of BA.5, [which appears to be resistant to antibodies built from vaccines and previous infections](#), is also adding urgency to China’s vaccination drive. In Beijing, the local government imposed China’s first vaccine mandate for public places last week — only to reverse the decision days later after a public backlash against forced immunization.

“China needs to return to the basics and launch a powerful drive for third doses to be administered, especially among the elderly,” Hong Kong University virologist Jin Dongyan told local media.

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HEADLINE	07/08 More workers no degrees get jobs
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/07/08/jobs-no-college-degrees/

Troy Groom, of Hyattsville, Md., was browsing social media this spring when he read something that made him perk up: Gov. Larry Hogan (R) [announced](#) in March that the state government would strip bachelor's degree requirements from thousands of job listings.

Groom had left Bowie State University when his first daughter was born. That daughter now has a college diploma. Groom still does not. But he had gained experience and credentials: a two-decade rise in retail and a suite of computer networking certificates that led him to three years of information technology contracting gigs.

When Groom interviewed for his first IT job, he heard the dispiriting sentence that trips up so many careers: "I'm looking for someone with a bachelor's degree." But the hiring manager at that job looked past the unchecked box and took Groom on as a configuration management analyst.

That was one position, and one hiring manager. Who knew what would happen with the next job search? With Hogan's move, however, the lack of a degree wasn't an obstacle: It was a reason to be recruited.

"It means a lot," Groom said of Hogan's announcement. "There are a lot of companies limiting out a lot of talent. You can have a degree and not have the knowledge and skill sets."

He followed a link to a job site called Stellarworx and applied for two IT positions with the state.

Thanks to a tight labor market, more good jobs are opening up to workers who lack a bachelor's degree. A month after Maryland's announcement, Colorado Gov. Jared Polis (D) directed government agencies in his state to [embrace hiring workers for skills](#), not degrees. [Private sector employers](#) have been rolling back B.A. requirements, too.

While the [pandemic](#) labor shortage has prompted more employers to welcome applications from workers without degrees, workforce advocates have been pushing back for years with some success against so-called [degree inflation](#) triggered by the Great Recession. When the economy tanked in 2008 and millions of laid-off workers began competing for scarce jobs, employers got pickier about who they hired and increasingly added four-year degree requirements to some "middle-skills" jobs that had frequently been filled by workers without degrees. (Middle-skills jobs, which include positions in fields such as health care, IT and sales, require some training or education beyond high school, although not necessarily a B.A.)

The increasing availability of good jobs for those without degrees coincides with challenges for traditional higher education. Enrollment, already on a decade-long [decline](#), dropped precipitously during the pandemic, emptying a million seats at two-year and four-year colleges.

The lack of the credential has traditionally shut workers out of their desired professions and the wealth accumulation that comes with them. [Sixty-two percent of Americans](#) over 25 have no bachelor's degree, and that number rises to 72 percent for Black adults and 79 percent for Hispanic adults. Any shift in the workforce to the advantage of workers without degrees carries obvious implications for economic mobility and equity.

However wide the door opens for workers without degrees, they won't get through it without sufficient skills. Their success in the labor market depends upon finding an affordable pathway to develop those skills and the willingness of employers to keep prioritizing skills over degrees, even if a recession upends the job market.

Some workforce observers see reasons to believe employers will keep that door open for workers without degrees, even if the economy sends more college graduates their way.

When the Hogan administration heard how hard it was becoming for agencies to fill open positions, it partnered with a nonprofit organization called Opportunity@Work to recruit workers like Groom. Opportunity@Work calls such workers "STARs," because they are Skilled Through Alternative Routes, like workforce training, community college courses and job experience.

Opportunity@Work connects STARs to training programs and works with employers to develop job listings for its Stellarworx employment website. The organization says [70 million](#) Americans are STARs. Maryland labor secretary Tiffany Robinson estimated that 47 percent of Maryland workers are, too. “We had a flood of applications on the first tranche of postings,” Robinson said.

Businesses like Google, IBM, and Accenture have also made high-profile moves to boost skills-based hiring. In a report earlier this year, the labor analytics firm Burning Glass [found that just 9 percent](#) of Accenture’s “computer support specialist” listings required a bachelor’s in 2021, down from 46 percent in 2017.

During the pandemic, employers ditched degree requirements at an even faster pace. In January, the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia examined a subset of middle-skill jobs and [found](#) that the proportion of job listings asking for a college degree dropped 4 percent between the first quarter of 2020 and the second quarter of 2021. In the Philly Fed’s estimation, that means 700,000 more of what it calls “opportunity jobs” — positions open to those lacking degrees that pay more than the U.S. yearly median of \$36,660.

Employers could slap bachelor’s requirements on these kinds of listings again, if job seekers come flooding back. But Joseph Fuller, a professor of management at Harvard Business School, believes many of them likely won’t.

The Burning Glass report, which Fuller co-wrote, found that between 2017 and 2019, the number of positions requiring a B.A. dropped by more than 5 percent in roughly half of all middle-skills occupations. Only a quarter of these changes were “cyclical,” or attributable to the labor market. Sixty-three percent of the changes were deemed “potentially permanent” shifts in hiring practices.

But workers will still need some alternative way to build the skills required to get hired without a college degree. Many job seekers never get that chance because they are stuck in low-wage, low-skill jobs and, as Fuller put it, “can’t afford not to work.”

Fuller points to the work of Social Finance, a nonprofit that helps workers train without going under financially. In February, Google announced [a \\$100 million partnership with Social Finance](#) to help as many as 20,000 workers earn IT certificates. Social Finance will draw on nonprofit workforce groups such as YearUp and Merit America to train participants and counsel them toward employment.

Halid Hamadi, a 28-year-old Washington resident, stumbled upon a Merit America IT training program on [Indeed.com](#). “I was like, ‘Okay, that’s too good to be true,’” he said. “Because in bold they said, ‘We’re looking for minorities that don’t have a bachelor’s degree.’”

Hamadi had withdrawn from Pennsylvania State University in 2016 for financial reasons and taken a minimum wage retail job back home in Montgomery County in Maryland. Merit America provided a stipend that helped him afford a bus pass to attend job counseling sessions while he completed a 13-week Coursera program to earn a Google IT certification. His first job was a \$45,000 “tier one” tech support position with a health care software developer. Two promotions later, he was an integration engineer making \$75,000.

Another Merit America participant, 32-year-old Amber Wallace Dekie of Manassas, Va., graduated high school in 2008.

She worked as a nurse’s aide, clinical technician and pharmacy assistant, never earning more than \$14 per hour. Then her boyfriend landed a good IT job, and she started looking for her own. Like Hamadi, she stumbled onto Merit America’s program browsing IT listings on [Indeed.com](#), applied, and completed the training. With her new Google certification, she went to Stellarworx and found a \$22-per-hour help desk job.

A bachelor's degree still holds prestige as a ticket to the middle class, but its value has received increasing scrutiny. In the last several years, [rising tuition](#) and student loan debt have led more Americans to reconsider an investment in postsecondary education. When Gallup asked Americans in 2019 about the value of college degrees, just 51 percent answered "very important," down from 70 percent in 2013.

Whether even more Americans opt out of four-year college will depend in part on the jobs available without that diploma. Anthony Carnevale, director of Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, said that a decade from now, 40 percent of jobs for those who lack a four-year degree but have some postsecondary education will be good — which he defined as paying at least \$40,000 per year by the time the worker reaches age 40. That's compared to 75 percent for four-year degree holders.

And he noted that while 30 percent of two-year degree holders earn more than those with four-year degrees, a bachelor's degree still pays off in the long run [through a significant advantage in lifetime earnings](#).

But, Carnevale said, "If you're careful and make good choices, you don't need a B.A."

Still, while more workers may be finding good jobs without degrees, not all of them have foreclosed on the idea of returning to school. Some, like Wallace Dekie, worry they'll hit a career ceiling without a college diploma.

"Certificates are huge in IT. A certificate will get you in the door. But if you're going to go anywhere, you need that [B.A.] in addition," she said.

She's currently looking into an online bachelor's program at Western Governors University, an online-only institution.

The strategy of earning certificates in the IT field has also worked out well so far for Groom, even if it depended on the good luck of having a hiring manager who looked past his lack of a college diploma. Groom has already earned six figures in one year. The Hogan administration's move to hire for skills rather than degrees has opened another potential career path for him, and he hopes landing an IT job with the government will give him an entree to a career in cybersecurity.

Nonetheless, like Wallace Dekie, he's hoping to bolster his career prospects even further.

Nearly three decades after leaving college the first time, he has enrolled at the University of Maryland Baltimore County to work toward his bachelor's degree again.

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HEADLINE	07/08 Yet another omicron subvariant concern
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/07/yet-another-omicron-subvariant-is-raising-concern-as-ba-5-sweeps-the-us/
GIST	<p>As the omicron coronavirus subvariant BA.5 blazes through the US—accounting for an estimated 54 percent of cases in the country—experts are eyeing another subvariant that threatens to follow hot on its heels.</p> <p>The subvariant is referred to as BA.2.75 and was first detected in India in late May. Amid a backdrop of BA.2 and BA.5 circulating in India, the newcomer BA.2.75 began quickly gaining ground in June. This week it reached 23 percent of recent virus samples there. Meanwhile, BA.2.75 spread beyond India's borders. It is now present in about 10 other countries, including the US, according to the World Health Organization.</p> <p>Experts are concerned about the new subvariant, not just because of its rapid rise. It has several mutations in its spike protein—the critical protein that allows the virus to latch onto human cells and the protein that acts as a prime target for immune responses. In particular, BA.2.75 has key mutations that suggest it could</p>

be good at [evading antibody responses](#) in people who have been vaccinated and/or previously infected with earlier omicron subvariants.

"This subvariant seems to have a few mutations on the receptor binding domain of the spike protein, so obviously, that's a key part of the virus that attaches itself to the human receptor, so we have to watch that," Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, the chief scientist for the World Health Organization, said in [a video explainer this week](#).

Swaminathan notes that, for now, the number of samples and sequences is still low, and our understanding of this version of the virus is limited. "It's still too early to know if this subvariant has properties of additional immune evasion or, indeed, of being more clinically severe. We don't know that. So, we have to wait and see," she said, adding that WHO is monitoring the subvariant closely.

US situation

So far, three cases of BA.2.75 have been detected in the US, which were identified in California and Washington state. Helix—a California-based viral surveillance company that works with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to track emerging coronavirus variants—confirmed the third US case to Ars in an email Friday. Samples for the three US cases were collected on June 14, June 15, and June 27.

Helix said it's still too early to predict how BA.2.75 will play out in the US, but the subvariant is worth keeping an eye on—which echoes warnings from outside experts.

In the meantime, BA.5 is sweeping the US. The prevalence of the previous reigning omicron subvariant, BA.2.12.1, has fallen to an estimated 27 percent. BA.4—a subvariant that shares the same spike mutations as BA.5 and has spread alongside BA.5 elsewhere—appears to have stalled out, accounting for just 16.5 percent of US cases.

Amid BA.5's rise, cases have maintained a high plateau, though many cases detected by rapid tests at home are not being reported. According to [tracking by The New York Times](#), the country is averaging around 108,000 new cases per day. Some experts are anxiously waiting to see if there will be a bump following Independence Day celebrations. Just before the holiday, the positivity rate of reported tests reached a concerning 17.5 percent.

Otherwise, daily hospitalizations are up 15 percent over the last two weeks, to an average of 35,651. Admission to intensive care units is also up 16 percent. Deaths remain plateaued at around 320 per day.

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HEADLINE	07/10 Labor shortage; opportunity to ex-prisoners
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/dire-us-labor-shortage-opportunity-prisoners-86550821
GIST	<p>JACKSON, Miss. -- When Antonio McGowan left the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman after serving 17 years, he was free for the first time since he was 15. But as an adult finally out from behind bars, he immediately found himself confined to menial labor.</p> <p>McGowan needed stable work, for a paycheck and to keep busy, but temporary gigs were all he could find. Just as those around him counseled the importance of maintaining a routine, he became trapped in a cycle of odd jobs and irregular hours. He trimmed grass one week and painted a house the next. But he couldn't land anything full time, and the unpredictability of his income proved challenging. Disconnection notices and unpaid bills piled up.</p> <p>"Things weren't in place," McGowan said. "They weren't where I wanted them to be as far as being an individual back in society. It was a struggle."</p> <p>After several years adrift, McGowan was finally able to regain his footing with the help of the Hinds County Reentry Program, a workforce training program for former inmates created in October. Reentry programs are one way employers are trying to fill some of the 11.3 million open jobs in the U.S. amid a</p>

dire national labor shortage. The practice of employing people with a criminal record is known as “second-chance hiring.”

In rosier economic times, many former prisoners faced steep obstacles to finding work. The labor shortage sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic now presents them with opportunities, said Eric Beamon, a recruiter for MagCor, a company that provides job training to people in Mississippi correctional facilities.

“We think the pandemic, in a sense, was a big help,” Beamon said. “If no one wants to work anymore or if everyone wants to work from home, employers are begging for employees.”

Some studies have shown that stable jobs are a major factor in reducing recidivism. Still, not everyone is willing to hire an ex-convict, and a lack of job opportunities for those with a criminal record is still stymieing workforce participation in the economy, Stephanie Ferguson, a senior manager of employment policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, wrote in a May report.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, barriers faced by people with felony convictions were linked to a loss of at least 1.7 million employees from the workforce and a cost of at least \$78 billion to the economy in 2014, the year that McGowan left prison.

The current desperate straits in which employers now find themselves could help spur a change. In a 2021 survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, or SHRM; the SHRM Foundation and the Charles Koch Institute, 53% of human resource professionals said they would be willing to hire people with criminal records — up from just 37% in 2018.

That's where programs like Hinds County Reentry and MagCor step in, helping to make former inmates more desirable as candidates by properly training them to reintegrate into society and matching them with jobs tailored to their skills and interests.

McGowan said he'd like to work in air conditioning and heating repair, and the program's staff members recommended him to Upchurch Services, a Mississippi-based company that allows workers to take classes in repair services while gaining experience in the field. McGowan was hired the second week of May.

He makes \$15 per hour, working 40 hours per week with paid overtime. He said he has full health care coverage — and he loves the work.

“Summer, winter, spring or fall, you'll need either heat or air conditioning,” he said. “So I found something I can help people out with. At the same time, it can keep me in the working class, so I don't fall back into the things I used to do.”

Beamon, one of numerous recruiters staffing booths at a job fair for ex-prisoners in Jackson recently — other companies represented included Waffle House, Amazon and Columbus, Mississippi-based Lyle Machinery — said he has seen an influx of new jobs and wages that are rising precipitously, some to as much as \$20 per hour. Mississippi has not enacted a state minimum wage, and the federal standard is still \$7.25.

In addition to skills training, the workforce reentry programs can provide parolees with mentors who have firsthand knowledge about the travails of life after incarceration. For Savannah Hayden, who was released from prison in November after serving time for five felony convictions, that person was Cynetra Freeman. Freeman is the founder of the Mississippi Center for Reentry, an organization offering work readiness programs to inmates preparing to leave prison.

Freeman remembers taking a bus to an employment agency the day after she was released from prison. She said the agency told her she would never get a job because of her record.

“This crushed me and made me think about others who felt the same devastation,” Freeman said. “Employment is one of the toughest aspects for a person who is just returning home.”

	<p>Hayden thought she might string together temporary jobs to make ends meet. But Freeman encouraged her to think long term, specifically about a job in which she could use her experience as a formerly incarcerated person to help others reentering society. Hayden now works for Freeman as the mental health and drug addiction coordinator at the Center for Reentry.</p> <p>“After so many doors are slammed in your face, you get tired of asking,” Hayden said. “But there will be a person who says ‘yes,’ and that will change your life.”</p> <p>Hayden was adopted and spent years in the state’s foster system.</p> <p>"It didn't dawn on me that I might be able to help people who grew up in the same position," she said. "I think I found my niche."</p> <p>McGowan, who had been convicted of violent crimes, said his work is more than just a job.</p> <p>"It's the look on someone's face," he said. "When you fix something of theirs that's been broken, they just smile. I spent so many years hurting people. So I know the look people have when they feel hurt. To see the reverse of that, it's enough to make me happy."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/08 China 'stealth bomber' flight imminent?
SOURCE	https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/first-flight-for-chinas-h-20-stealth-bomber-could-be-imminent-report
GIST	<p>China’s state-run media has dropped a strong hint that the first flight of the country’s long-awaited H-20, the next-generation bomber that’s expected to be a broad counterpart to America’s stealth bomber, could be imminent. An article, published yesterday in the Communist Party-affiliated <i>Global Times</i> newspaper reports that an official at the Chinese Flight Test Establishment, or CFTE, told visiting officials that China is preparing to conduct a flight test of a new aircraft. The remark is attributed to Ge Heping, the party chief of the CFTE, and the official visit is described as a “rally meeting ... to mobilize personnel involved in the test.”</p> <p>Another article, on the Chinese news website <i>Guancha</i>, quotes a news item that appeared recently on the WeChat instant messaging account of the CFTE. While this item recounts the same visit to the test center by high-ranking Chinese Communist Party officials, the standout part refers to “the development of a certain [aircraft] type” and its implied importance to the country. Although the article is deliberately vague, its description of the mysterious new aircraft as being of “strategic, historic significance” is certainly suggestive of the H-20.</p> <p>Neither of those articles provides further details about the aircraft that’s referred to, although, in the past, the H-20 has been referred to as a “strategic project.”</p> <p>With much speculation about the H-20 program, it’s not entirely surprising that many have drawn a connection between it and the news of the imminent flight test of a new aircraft emanating from the CFTE. Moreover, the bombastic description of the type is certainly in keeping with what little we do know about the H-20. After all, this is perhaps China’s most ambitious military aircraft project to date, its first fully homegrown long-range bomber, and a platform that has the potential to alter the strategic balance in the Asia-Pacific region by offering new means of striking key locations and infrastructure.</p> <p>While it should be stressed here that it is highly unusual for China to release information about the upcoming first flights of new military aircraft types, the H-20 program has, in general, been treated somewhat differently, including fairly explicit references to specific U.S. stealth bombers.</p> <p>In October last year, in an event that received little media attention at the time, an image was posted to the Weibo microblogging website that referred to the handover of a mock-up of a “special type” of aircraft. While that alone could count for numerous different types, the photo included the CEO and the chief</p>

designer from the Xi'an Aircraft Industrial Corporation, or XAC, apparently looking over the (unseen) mock-up. XAC is acknowledged to be the prime contractor responsible for the development of the H-20, alongside its 603 Aircraft Design Institute. Handover of a mock-up, or perhaps another kind of non-flying testing apparatus, [such as an 'iron bird'](#) full-scale systems test article, would also make sense at this stage in the program and would follow unconfirmed [reports](#) from July 2021 that a mock-up had been completed.

More surprisingly, given the highly secretive nature of the program, in January 2021, an official recruitment video for China's People's Liberation Army Air Force, or PLAAF, included a [first official rendering](#) of the H-20. This showed an aircraft obscured by a tarpaulin or sheet but still with a distinct resemblance to the U.S. Air Force's [B-2 Spirit](#) and [the future B-21 Raider](#), although it's also entirely possible that the depiction in the video doesn't accurately reflect the actual design.

Before this teaser, there was [another video](#), this time from the state-run Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), of which XAC is a subsidiary. Released in 2018, this showed a computer-generated flying-wing style aircraft under a sheet with the text "The Next..." in English. At the time, much was made of this video's similarity to a well-known Northrop Grumman [Superbowl ad](#) that provided a sneak preview of the B-21.

Neither of these official videos actually referred to the H-20 by name or revealed details of the aircraft's role. Taken together, however, and with reference to radar cross-section test models, it's now widely assumed that the forthcoming bomber will indeed have a flying-wing configuration and will be broadly similar in size to the B-2. That said, there are also rumors that the Chinese bomber will incorporate some unique features, with some speculation that it could have some kind of folding vertical tail surfaces.

Overall, however, very little is known about the H-20 and it's clear that, despite possible hints, China wants to keep it that way, for now at least.

It's thought that work on the H-20 began at XAC's 603 Aircraft Design Institute in the early 2000s and that both subsonic flying-wing and supersonic delta-wing configurations were studied and yielded several scale models. It seems that by around 2011, the designers had settled on a subsonic flying wing, likely with four engines.

In terms of creating a functional flying-wing bomber, there have been suggestions that XAC may have benefited from experience gained with the GJ-11 Sharp Sword combat drone, as well as other drones of similar configuration, albeit in a much smaller size. Certainly, designs like the Sharp Sword are likely to have yielded important data on flight-control systems and radar-defeating technologies, the latter including the GJ-11's dorsal engine intake.

Similarly, with at least two stealthy manned fighter jets ([J-20](#) and [FC-31](#)) now flying, China has had plenty of opportunities to understand the practicalities of low-observable technologies, which are expected to play a prominent role in the H-20's design, helping it survive when penetrating contested airspace. Indeed, U.S. intelligence now assesses that China has actually embarked on producing [two new](#) low-observable bombers, with the strategic H-20 expected to be complemented by a medium-size/medium-range [fighter-bomber](#), likely a twin-seater with twin engines.

Meanwhile, analysts expect that the H-20 will emerge with an active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar, perhaps using conformal antennas and that it will have a primary armament of subsonic cruise missiles, carried internally on a rotary launcher.

All in all, the H-20 should represent an enormous advance over the later variants of the XAC H-6 that currently make up the PLAAF long-range bomber fleet. Despite the more recent addition of modern cruise missiles, as well as [air-launched ballistic missiles](#) and possible [hypersonic weapons](#), the H-6 design dates back to the Soviet Tu-16 Badger of the early 1950s. The H-20 will offer far greater capabilities as a long-range strategic platform, including in the nuclear deterrent role. Ultimately, it's easy to envisage how the H-20 might serve alongside specialist versions of the H-6, in a similar way to the future [B-21/B-52](#) combination for the U.S. Air Force.

	<p>After reports in early 2013 that the H-20 program had been given the go-ahead for full-scale development, there followed a flurry of unofficial disclosures pointing to further progress on the aircraft. These included the completion of a 3D digital prototype, revelations of serpentine-shaped engine intake and exhaust ducts to reduce radar signature, the production of an ‘iron bird’ ground test rig, and tests of the flight-control system. There have also been sightings of the aforementioned radar cross-section test models that could fit the design.</p> <p>In the past, there has been speculation that the H-20 could make an official maiden flight in 2023, which would again appear to lend broad credibility to reports connecting the CFTE statements with the bomber’s first flight. It’s also notable that the potential first flight of the H-20 is apparently so closely aligned with that of the B-21, despite delays to the U.S. program. It could well be that Beijing is actively trying to match the pace of the U.S. program, not only to ensure its own capabilities but perhaps also as a point of pride for its own rapidly advancing military aerospace industry.</p> <p>On the other hand, there are other possible Chinese aircraft projects that could conceivably also be referred to as having “strategic, historic significance,” potentially also including civilian ones, although the H-20 still seems the most likely candidate.</p> <p>Overall, the existence of the H-20 now seems to be very much an open secret and the number of official Chinese sources that appear to refer to the bomber, however obliquely, only seems to be growing. With that in mind, further developments in the H-20 program can probably be expected before too long.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/09 Housing market appears to be cooling off
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-US/news/realestate/the-housing-market-at-last-appears-to-be-cooling-off/ar-AAZnHCn
GIST	<p>After a stunning rise in home prices enriched sellers and keyed up buyers into frantic bidding wars, there are signs that the U.S. housing market is starting to cool amid a surge of new inventory and higher interest rates.</p> <p>“For sale” signs are multiplying in previously red-hot markets like San Jose, Chicago and Phoenix. The volume of U.S. monthly home sales have registered double-digit declines in the past year, according to estimates from Zillow and the National Association of Realtors. In May alone, the number of houses sold is down 19 percent from the year-ago period, according to Zillow, and preliminary data suggests the falloff was more pronounced in June.</p> <p>“This year’s buyers are just much more savvy, and they deserve to be because they’re going to be paying more to purchase the home,” said Daniel Valdez, an agent with eXp Realty in Sacramento.</p> <p>The slowdown has, so far, provided little relief to buyers. Instead, analysts say, a growing affordability crisis — driven by the collision of inflation and rising interest rates — is forcing many would-be buyers to walk away.</p> <p>That’s because some sellers, mindful of the stratospheric gains of 2020 and 2021, which brought the average home price up more than 40 percent, are reluctant to lower their expectations. And home values are still gaining, up 19 percent on average in the year ending in June, according to the data firm Black Knight.</p> <p>“The market’s cooling off, but that cooling has happened on the backs of buyers getting discouraged, on buyers being forced out of the market,” said Jeff Tucker, a senior economist at Zillow. “People who thought they would join the party are being greeted by absolute carnage as far as affordability right now.”</p> <p>The cooling housing market reflects broader changes in the economy as policymakers work to get decades-high inflation under control.</p>

Rock-bottom interest rates in 2020 and 2021 helped fuel the surge in housing prices since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. But the Federal Reserve reversed course this year after inflation spiked, making the price of food, fuel, housing and other essentials a dominant economic concern. The central bank has bumped up its benchmark interest rate three times in 2022 and signaled that four more increases are pending. The [most recent hike](#) in June was three-quarters of a percentage point, the Fed's largest since 1994.

Higher rates means higher borrowing costs: The average rate for a 30-year fixed rate mortgage [stood at 5.3 percent on Thursday](#), according to Freddie Mac, up from 2.9 percent a year ago. It also coincides with a battered stock market and higher costs for just about everything, making it harder to save for a down payment.

The resulting "affordability squeeze" is keeping many would-be buyers out and leading to fewer deals, analysts say.

Rachel Payne, a public school teacher in northern Virginia, says she gave up on her search recently after her dream home fell through. She and her fiancé, a professional poker player, put in an offer of \$1.05 million on a four-bedroom house in the Belle Haven neighborhood of Alexandria, but the seller wanted to waive an inspection.

That struck them as too risky, and they turned it down, she said. A week later they saw it sell for the same price.

"It's a truly terrible time to be a first-time home buyer," said Nicholas Gerli, founder and chief executive of Reventure Consulting.

Ali Wolf, chief economist at Zonda, says signs of the cool-down are everywhere: There's significantly more inventory in some places, residences are sitting on the market for longer, and many sellers are cutting their asking price to drum up interest, she said.

"What we are seeing today is that buyers do, in fact, have a limit," Wolf said. "Prospective home buyers have gotten to the place that they are either intentionally stepping out of the housing market as they wait and see what happens next, or are forced out of the housing market given the higher costs of homeownership."

Housing inventory, which refers to the number of active listings, has swelled in some of the country's most expensive metro areas, according Redfin data. It's up 47 percent in Denver, 43 percent in Oakland, Calif., and 10 percent in San Jose.

Some markets that were transformed during the pandemic have also pumped the brakes, says Eric Finnigan, director at John Burns Real Estate Consulting.

Boise, which became a pandemic haven for its cheap real estate and proximity to the Rocky Mountains, appears to have found its ceiling, Finnigan said. Home values there exploded 57 percent in 2020 and 2021 as people flooded into Idaho's largest city. But prices have grown just 3 percent between January and May, marking a turnaround that Finnigan called "stunning."

Many of the first-time buyers who landed homes since 2020 wound up paying more than they thought it was worth or asked family members for help.

After renting for just shy of a decade, Myles Hughes, 32, wanted a place of his own. Late last year, he got married and moved from Florida to Albuquerque for a change of scenery.

Hughes, a site manager at a space rental company and an actor and independent filmmaker, said he was outmaneuvered by other house hunters at every turn.

He visited dozens of properties over the course of four to five months, he said, but many of his serious contenders were swept off the market within days. He lost out on six properties, he said, even though he submitted bids quickly and increasingly above asking price. As the search dragged into months, interest rates kept climbing, as did asking prices, highlighting how it often takes time for sellers to adjust to new economic conditions and the squeezed budgets of buyers brought on by the Fed.

It was bid No. 7 that won Hughes his new three-bedroom, two-and-a-half bathroom home. But it took help from his dad, who put up the money for an all cash offer. "We could only afford to fight in the bidding wars so much," he said.

The lack of affordable options has frustrated buyers and sellers alike, analysts say.

The age-old "30 percent rule," a financial planning maxim that holds that a person should pay no more than 30 percent of their income into real estate, is being upended as a result. Black Knight reports that the typical payment-to-income ratio, based on today's higher interest rates and still-high prices, has spiked from 24 percent to 36 percent since January. By this measure, housing is at its least affordable point since the early 1980s.

Brian Brackeen, who runs the Cincinnati-based venture capital firm Lightship Capital, has seen the changing dynamics of the housing market firsthand. He bought a home of his own at the end of last year, then bought his daughter a starter home in Tulsa in April.

For his daughter's house, the rate was much higher and the down payment considerations were more difficult, he said. He also noticed a shift in the attitudes of sellers, where many are stubbornly holding onto high asking prices even as the market is shifting out of their favor.

"If you are a seller and you are so close to the gold rush, you don't want to give that money up when your friends sold for top dollar, on the first day with multiple offers," he said.

Brackeen sees the pool of prospective buyers changing, too.

"The world that current sellers are dealing with is more like their normal local market, not the prior covid-fueled supermarket, where people from all over the country are coming into each other's markets and inflating the number of buyers in any given place."

In the end, Brackeen's daughter's home appraised below the purchase price, so both parties had to give up several thousand dollars, he said. "The frothiness of the market isn't what it used to be."

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HEADLINE	07/09 'Bounty' for Justice sightings in D.C.
SOURCE	https://www.axios.com/2022/07/09/shutdowndc-supreme-court-abortion-roe-protest
GIST	<p>ShutDownDC, a liberal advocacy group in Washington, D.C., said on Friday that it will offer up to \$250 to service industry workers in the District for every sighting of the justices who overturned Roe v. Wade.</p> <p>Driving the news: This comes just days after Justice Brett Kavanaugh was forced to exit a restaurant in D.C. after abortion rights protesters showed up outside the premises.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The group is specifically targeting Kavanaugh and fellow Justices Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch, Amy Coney Barrett and Chief Justice John Roberts. <p>What they're saying: "DC Service Industry Workers... If you see Kavanaugh, Alito, Thomas, Gorsuch, Coney Barrett or Roberts DM us with the details!," ShutDownDC said in a tweet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">"We'll Venmo you \$50 for a confirmed sighting and \$200 if they're still there 30 mins after your message."

- Twitter told Axios in an email that ShutDownDC's tweets are "not in violation of Twitter's Safety policies."

The big picture: Prior to the Supreme Court overturning Roe, [the federal government](#) warned that there could be a potential surge in political violence once the ruling was handed down.

Between the lines: Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice America and the Liberate Abortion Campaign released a [statement](#) in late June saying they reject any and all threats of violence that come from the decision, adding that "[t]hey do not speak for us, our supporters, our communities, or our movement."

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HEADLINE	07/10 US concern: China 'alignment' with Russia
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/10/world/us-china-blinken-wang-yi-russia-ukraine-trade-intl-hnk/index.html
GIST	<p>United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Saturday he had discussed Russian aggression in Ukraine during more than five hours of talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and raised concerns over Beijing's alignment with Moscow.</p> <p>Both diplomats described their first in-person talks since October as "candid", with the meeting taking place a day after they attended a gathering of G20 foreign ministers on the Indonesian island of Bali.</p> <p>"I shared again with the state councilor that we are concerned about the PRC's alignment with Russia," Blinken told a news conference after the talks, referring to the People's Republic of China.</p> <p>He said he did not think China was behaving in a neutral way as it had supported Russia in the United Nations and "amplified Russian propaganda".</p> <p>After the meeting, a US official said "neither side held back".</p> <p>"We were very open about where our differences are ... but the meeting was also constructive because despite the candor, the tone was very professional," the official said.</p> <p>Blinken said Chinese leader Xi Jinping had made it clear in a call with President Vladimir Putin on June 13 that he stood by a decision to form a partnership with Russia.</p> <p>Shortly before Russia's February 24 invasion of Ukraine, Beijing and Moscow announced a "no limits" partnership, although US officials say they have not seen China evade tough US-led sanctions on Russia or provide it with military equipment.</p> <p>US officials have warned of consequences, including sanctions, should China offer material support for the war that Moscow calls a "special military operation" to degrade the Ukrainian military. Kyiv and its Western allies say the invasion is an unprovoked land grab.</p> <p>Asked about his refusal to hold talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at the G20, Blinken said: "The problem is this: we see no signs whatsoever that Russia, at this moment in time, is prepared to engage in meaningful diplomacy."</p> <p>Wang exchanged in-depth views on "the Ukraine issue" during Saturday's talks, according to a statement released by his ministry, without giving details.</p> <p>He also told Blinken that the direction of US-China relations was in danger of being further led "astray" due to a problem with the United States' perception of China.</p> <p>"Many people believe that the United States is suffering from an increasingly serious bout of 'Sinophobia'," Wang was quoted as saying.</p>

Question of tariffs

Wang also said Washington should cancel additional tariffs imposed on China as soon as possible and cease unilateral sanctions on Chinese companies.

US officials had said before the talks that the meeting was aimed at keeping the difficult US-China relationship stable and preventing it from veering inadvertently into conflict.

In late June, US national security adviser Jake Sullivan said US President Joe Biden and China's Xi were expected to speak again in the next few weeks.

Daniel Russel, a top US diplomat for East Asia under former President Barack Obama who has close contact with Biden administration officials, said ahead of the talks a key aim for the meeting would be to explore the possibility of an in-person meeting between Biden and Xi, their first as leaders.

The US calls China its main strategic rival and is concerned it might one day attempt to take over the self-ruled democratic island of Taiwan.

Despite their rivalry, the world's two largest economies remain major trading partners, and Biden has been considering scrapping tariffs on a range of Chinese goods to curb surging US inflation before November midterm elections.

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HEADLINE	07/09 Zelenskiy sacks envoys, ambassadors
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/zelenskiy-sacks-ukraines-envoy-germany-other-ambassadors-2022-07-09/
GIST	<p>KYIV, July 9 (Reuters) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Saturday that he had dismissed several of Kyiv's senior envoys abroad, including the country's outspoken ambassador to Germany.</p> <p>Zelenskiy announced the sacking of Ukraine's ambassadors to Germany, India, the Czech Republic, Norway and Hungary and said new candidates were being readied for the positions.</p> <p>"This rotation is a normal part of diplomatic practice," he said in a statement.</p> <p>It was not clear if the envoys would be assigned new positions.</p> <p>Zelenskiy has urged his diplomats to drum up international support and military aid for Ukraine as it tries to fend off Russia's Feb. 24 invasion.</p> <p>Kyiv's relations with Germany, which is heavily reliant on Russian energy supplies and also Europe's biggest economy, are particularly sensitive.</p> <p>Andriy Melnyk, who was appointed by Zelenskiy's predecessor as ambassador to Germany in late 2014, is well known among politicians and diplomats in Berlin.</p> <p>The 46-year-old regularly engages in outspoken social media exchanges and has branded politicians and intellectuals who oppose arming Ukraine to fight the Russian invasion as appeasers.</p> <p>He once accused German Chancellor Olaf Scholz of behaving like an "offended liver sausage" when Scholz did not immediately accept an invitation by Zelenskiy to visit Kyiv.</p> <p>Kyiv and Berlin are currently at odds over a German-made turbine undergoing maintenance in Canada. Germany wants Ottawa to return the turbine to Russian natural gas giant Gazprom to pump gas to Europe, but Kyiv had urged Canada to keep the turbine, saying a return would violate sanctions on Moscow.</p>

	Canada said on Saturday it would return the turbine.
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HEADLINE	07/10 Ukraine urges civilians to flee south
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-tells-residents-leave-occupied-south-due-counter-attack-plans-2022-07-10/
GIST	<p>KYIV, July 10 (Reuters) - Ukraine's deputy prime minister on Sunday urged civilians in the Russian-occupied southern region of Kherson to urgently evacuate as Ukraine's armed forces were preparing a counter-attack there.</p> <p>Ukraine lost control of most of the Black Sea region of Kherson, including its eponymous capital, in the first weeks after Russia's Feb. 24 invasion.</p> <p>"It's clear there will be fighting, there will be artillery shelling... and we therefore urge (people) to evacuate urgently," Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said on national television.</p> <p>She said she could not say when exactly the counter-offensive would happen.</p> <p>"I know for sure that there should not be women and children there, and that they should not become human shields," she said.</p> <p>Kherson's Russian-installed authorities say they want to hold a referendum on seceding to Russia, but they have not yet set a date. The Kremlin says the future of the region should be determined by its residents.</p> <p>The Kherson region includes the city of Kherson, which before the war had a population of nearly 300,000. It is not known how many of the city's residents are still there.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Cuba struggles to emerge from crisis
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/year-protests-cuba-struggles-emerge-crisis-86557919
GIST	<p>HAVANA -- A year after the largest protests in decades shook Cuba's single-party government, hundreds of people who participated are in prison and the economic and political factors that caused the demonstrations largely remain.</p> <p>Streets and public squares filled with protesters on July 11 and 12, 2021, some answering social media appeals, others joining spontaneously to express frustration with shortages, long lines and a lack of political options.</p> <p>Since then, a few things have changed: The Communist Party government has made its most expansive — if still limited — opening in six decades to private enterprise, authorizing small and medium sized companies. And the easing of the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed a gradual revival of the critical tourism industry.</p> <p>But the overall economy remains dire, with long lines and rapidly rising prices for limited goods. That has fed a huge increase in migration, principally to the United States.</p> <p>And the economy remains squeezed by U.S. sanctions. While U.S. President Joe Biden has eased some, such as allowing U.S. residents to send more money to Cuban relatives and processing some visas in Cuba, he has been slow to implement his campaign promises to turn back many of the other restrictions imposed by former President Donald Trump. That commitment may have been further delayed by the Cuban government's crackdown on the protests, which soured the atmosphere for any seeming concessions from Washington.</p>

The protests changed everything, however, for the Román family of Havana's La Guinera neighborhood.

Three of the family's members were arrested on June 12, 2021 and two remain imprisoned.

"They haven't committed a crime so serious that it warrants that punishment," said Emilio Román, 51, whose 26-year-old son Yosney, a construction worker, and 24-year-old daughter Mackyanis, a housewife, were sentenced to 10 years in prison on sedition charges in March. His youngest daughter, 18-year-old Emiyoslan, was given conditional release because she was a minor when arrested.

Three cousins were arrested as well — two of them now imprisoned for 10 years as well.

Officials haven't said how many people were arrested during the protests that occurred in dozens of places across the country, but an independent organization formed to track the cases, Justice 11J, has counted more than 1,400.

The national prosecutor's office said in June that courts had imposed 488 sentences on protesters, ranging up to 25 years in prison.

"The government has demonstrated its authoritarian nature," said Giselle Morfi, a Cuban attorney now based in Mexico who works with Cubalex, a legal aid group focused on human rights in Cuba. "The state criminalizes the exercise of fundamental rights that should be protected within any democratic society, such as freedom of expression, and it stigmatizes protest."

She said the crackdown is meant to dissuade Cubans from any new wave of protests.

One who did call for more demonstrations — unsuccessfully — last November, playwright Yunió García, wound up leaving the country.

Authorities insist those arrested are not political prisoners but people who have violated laws against public disorder, vandalism or sedition, often at the instigation of U.S. based opposition groups using social media to attack the socialist state.

Following a massive inoculation campaign using vaccines developed in Cuba itself, authorities say they have seen no COVID-19 deaths in more than a month. Hotels and air routes closed for more than a year have been reopening — something crucial for a country that depends heavily on foreign tourism for the hard currency needed to import food and other crucial goods.

Cuba recorded only 573,000 foreign visitors last year, down from 4.2 million in 2019.

But long lines remain for fuel and food and power outages are common following the pandemic-induced economic fall of 11% in 2020 and a weak 2% rebound in 2021.

"Those Cuban officials refuse to accept the three most simple economic keys to the crisis: breakfast, lunch and dinner," said Domingo Amuchástegui, a former Cuban diplomat. He argues that the opening to small private business is still too limited.

"The great lesson of China and Vietnam is being ignored," he said, referring to Communist-led nations that have made much more sweeping openings to private enterprise.

Still, Cuba's Economy Ministry announced in mid-June that 3,980 small and medium sized private enterprises had been approved since September, creating 66,300 jobs.

The once-mighty sugar industry managed to produce only 480,000 metric tons in the most recent harvest, just over half of the planned output and not enough to meet foreign contracts.

	<p>But perhaps the hardest blow for most Cubans is the inflation that followed elimination of the country's old dual-currency system — a long-discussed reform that finally arrived in the midst of other crises.</p> <p>While the newly unified peso officially trades at 24 to the dollar, prices on the street run at 100 to 1.</p> <p>One of the most visible consequences of the economic crisis — and to a smaller extent the crackdown — is the sharp rise in emigration.</p> <p>The U.S. Customs and Border Patrol recorded encountering some 140,000 Cubans at U.S. land borders from the start of the fiscal year in October through May — a figure exceeding even the dramatic Mariel exodus of 1980, when 125,000 Cubans reached the U.S.</p> <p>And the U.S. Coast Guard has reported intercepting 2,464 Cuban migrants at sea — also a leap from recent years.</p> <p>“There are ever fewer young people ready to make a life in the country,” said Cuban-born lawyer and political analyst Luis Carlos Battista, who said the loss is economically damaging for a small nation with an aging population trying to cope with U.S. economic sanctions.</p> <p>“It easily could be that that 1.5% of the Cuban population has left in just 10 months,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Portugal battles wildfires in drought, heat
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/portugal-battles-wildfires-amid-drought-heat-29-injured-86561460
GIST	<p>LISBON, Portugal -- More than 3,000 firefighters and over 60 aircraft battled wildfires Sunday in Portugal that authorities say have injured 29 people.</p> <p>Authorities said 12 firefighters and 17 civilians required medical assistance to treat minor injuries caused by the blazes, as reported by Portuguese state television RTP and other local media. By Sunday afternoon, Portugal’s Civil Protection Agency said more than 3,000 firefighters were combating active fires.</p> <p>The European Union on Sunday activated its firefighting air fleet assistance program that allows member nations to share resources to help Portugal. Spain, which has also endured wildfires recently, quickly responded by mobilizing two firefighting planes to send to its Iberian neighbor, according to the EU crisis commissioner, Janez Lenarcic.</p> <p>Portugal's government said it has deployed 60 aircraft to support its ground crews.</p> <p>Portugal has long suffered large, and sometimes tragic, forest fires. In 2017, out-of-control wildfires killed more than 100 people.</p> <p>The European Union says climate change has the continent facing one of its hardest years for natural disasters such as droughts and wildfires.</p> <p>Across the border in Spain, a fire in the southwest led authorities to evacuate 30 people from homes as a precaution. Some 115 firefighters backed by helicopters and planes were deployed to that fire near the village of El Ronquillo.</p> <p>Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa postponed his plans to visit Mozambique this week “in view of the weather forecasts that indicate a very serious worsening of the risk of rural fires.”</p> <p>Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa likewise canceled his trip to New York where he was scheduled to speak at the U.N. Economic and Social Council.</p>

	<p>In June, 96% of the southern European country was classified as being in either in “extreme” or “severe” drought.</p> <p>The fires have caused authorities to increase a state of alert already in place. Portugal's government declared a state of heightened alert Saturday that will run through Friday.</p> <p>“This means (...) we can automatically and preventively activate all emergency and civil protection plans at all territorial levels,” said Interior Administration Minister José Luís Carneiro.</p> <p>The wildfires are coming as Portugal is enduring a heat wave with temperatures expected up to 43 degrees Celsius (109 degrees Fahrenheit). The country has adopted restrictions barring public access to forests deemed to be at special risk, banned the use of farm machinery and outlawed fireworks.</p> <p>Costa, in a message on Twitter, reminded citizens not to light any fires outdoors or use heavy farm machinery that can cause sparks.</p> <p>“Preventing fires is the best help we can give our firefighters,” the prime minister wrote.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Iran: new centrifuges enrich to 20%
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-enriches-20-centrifuges-fortified-site-86548051
GIST	<p>TEHRAN, Iran -- Iran announced Sunday that it has begun enriching uranium up to 20% using sophisticated centrifuges at its underground Fordo nuclear plant, state TV reported, an escalation that comes amid a standoff with the West over its tattered atomic deal.</p> <p>That Tehran is enriching uranium up to 20% purity — a technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90% — with a new set of its most advanced centrifuges at a facility deep inside a mountain deals yet another blow to the already slim chances of reviving the accord.</p> <p>Behrouz Kamalvandi, a spokesman for Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization, said uranium enriched to 20% was collected for the first time from advanced IR-6 centrifuges on Saturday. He said Iran had informed the U.N. nuclear watchdog about the development two weeks ago.</p> <p>Centrifuges are used to spin enriched uranium into higher levels of purity. Tehran’s 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers had called for Fordo to become a research-and-development facility and restricted centrifuges there to non-nuclear uses.</p> <p>Iran had previously told the IAEA that it was preparing to enrich uranium through a new cascade of 166 advanced IR-6 centrifuges at its underground Fordo facility. But it hadn’t revealed the level at which the cascade would be enriching.</p> <p>The International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N.’s nuclear watchdog, told The Associated Press that it had verified on Saturday that Iran was using a set-up that allowed it to more swiftly and easily switch between enrichment levels.</p> <p>In a report to member states, Director General Rafael Grossi described a system of “modified sub-headers,” which he said allowed Iran to inject gas enriched up to 5% purity into a cascade of 166 IR-6 centrifuges for the purpose of producing uranium enriched up to 20% purity.</p> <p>Iran did not comment on the latest IAEA finding.</p> <p>Nuclear talks have been at a standstill for months. The U.S. special envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, described the latest round of negotiations in Qatar as “more than a little bit of a wasted occasion.”</p>

The IAEA reported last month that Iran has 43 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60% purity — a short step to 90%. Nonproliferation experts warn that's enough fissile material for one nuclear weapon if Iran chose to pursue it.

However, Iran still would need to design a bomb and a delivery system for it, likely a monthslong project.

Iran insists its program is for peaceful purposes, though U.N. experts and Western intelligence agencies say Iran had an organized military nuclear program through 2003.

Tehran's escalating nuclear work has raised alarm with transparency rapidly diminishing. Last month Iran shut off more than two dozen IAEA monitoring cameras from various nuclear-related sites across the country.

Former President Donald Trump abandoned the nuclear deal in 2018 and re-imposed crushing sanctions on Tehran, setting off a series of tense incidents across the wider Mideast. Iran responded by massively increasing its nuclear work, growing its stockpile of highly enriched uranium and spinning advanced centrifuges banned by the accord.

Iran's adversary Israel has long opposed the nuclear accord, saying it delayed rather ended Iran's nuclear progress and arguing that sanctions relief empowered Tehran's proxy militias across the region.

On Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid called on the U.N. to re-impose multilateral sanctions on Iran — a bid that was met with stiff opposition when pushed by the Trump administration.

"The response of the international community must be decisive: to return to the U.N. Security Council and activate the sanctions mechanism at full force," Lapid, who is serving as caretaker leader, told his Cabinet. "Israel, for its part, maintains full freedom to act, diplomatically and operationally, in this fight against Iran's nuclear program."

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HEADLINE	07/10 Average gas price falls 19 cents: \$4.86/gal
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/average-us-gasoline-price-falls-19-cents-486-86564425
GIST	<p>CAMARILLO, Calif. -- The average U.S. price of regular-grade gasoline plunged 19 cents over the past two weeks to \$4.86 per gallon.</p> <p>Industry analyst Trilby Lundberg of the Lundberg Survey said Sunday that the continued decline comes as crude oil costs also fall.</p> <p>"Assuming oil prices do not shoot up from here, motorists may see prices drop another 10-20 cents as the oil price cuts continue making their way to street level," Lundberg said in a statement.</p> <p>The average price at the pump is down 24 cents over the past month, but it's \$1.66 higher than it was one year ago.</p> <p>Nationwide, the highest average price for regular-grade gas was in the San Francisco Bay Area, at \$6.14 per gallon. The lowest average was in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, at \$4.19 per gallon.</p> <p>According to the survey, the average price of diesel dropped 13 cents since June 24 to \$5.76 a gallon.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 'Heat dome' behind record-breaking highs
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/07/10/high-temperatures-heat-dome-break-records/10023708002/

GIST	<p>At least 10 heat records were broken in cities across the Southwest and central U.S. over the weekend, and more could fall this week amid continued forecasts of searing heat.</p> <p>Cities and towns in Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas all saw record highs on Friday and Saturday. Some broke temperature records set nearly a decade ago and others exceeded previous highs by up to six degrees. The high temperatures are largely the result of a "heat dome" – a persistent region of high pressure trapping heat over the area.</p> <p>While the daily records broken weren't necessarily widespread, given July is already a hot time of year, the conditions created by the heat dome have still been conducive to approaching and meeting record numbers in many areas, Accuweather Meteorologist Joseph Bauer told USA TODAY.</p> <p>"(The heat dome) has been there from late last week into this weekend, and it's going to remain there through this coming week, and that's what's going to keep it hot in the West," Bauer said. "It's been an extremely warm summer this year."</p> <p>What heat records were broken?</p> <p>In Colorado, Denver International Airport reported a record-breaking 100 degrees for July 9, according to the National Weather Service, surpassing a record high of 98 degrees for that date just last year. Colorado Springs also reached a record 97 degrees on the same day, breaking a record set in 2021.</p> <p>Parts of Texas broke records from almost a century ago: Austin's Camp Mabry military base hit a record daily high of 106 degrees Saturday, breaking a previous record of 105 degrees set in 1925 and matched in 2009. Waco, Texas, reached 108 degrees on Saturday, far exceeding a record high of 104 set in 1917, 1935 and 1978.</p> <p>Some states saw not just broken records, but shattered ones. At Tulsa, Oklahoma's Riverside Airport Friday, the temperature reached a record 105 degrees, widely surpassing the 2001 high of 99 degrees for July 8. The surrounding cities of McAlester and Muskogee in Oklahoma as well as Fayetteville, Fort Smith and NWA Airport in Arkansas also broke records by spans of one to six degrees.</p> <p>When will this heat wave be over?</p> <p>A cold front moving through North and South Dakota on Sunday could bring some relief to the Denver area this week, according to Bauer, but the strength of the heat dome is forecasted to spike temperatures in the area again in the following days, possibly up to another record-breaking level.</p> <p>There isn't much relief for the Austin area either, according to Bauer, who said Accuweather is forecasting temperatures "into the hundreds" through the next week, approaching record breaking numbers yet again.</p> <p>The heat dome is likely to shift and expand to the West as the week begins, and temperatures will be on the rise in Arizona, Nevada and Utah, according to Accuweather.</p> <p>The heat dome is strong enough to keep out cold fronts that approach areas affected by the dome, thus keeping heat balled up in places like the Great Plains, Bauer said – an area already suffering from a long period of drought.</p> <p>"It's unfortunate to see this setup, as there's not much relief in sight," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/09 DOT: bill of rights disabled passengers
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/news/2022/07/09/dot-bill-rights-disabled-passengers/10017000002/
GIST	Amid the summer travel surge, the Department of Transportation is putting pressure on airlines to provide more reliable and equitable services to all passengers.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg announced two initiatives on Friday meant to give all travelers a better experience in the air: A bill of rights for disabled passengers and a notice urging airlines to prioritize seating families together.

What is the disabled passenger bill of rights?

The bill of rights is a [summary](#) of existing laws that protect disabled airline passengers. It outlines their rights, and the responsibilities airlines have to accommodate them. These include:

1. The right to be treated with dignity and respect – a summary of antidiscrimination protections that cover air passengers.
2. The right to receive information about services and aircraft capabilities and limitations – a requirement for airlines to provide accessibility information about their aircraft to disabled travelers.
3. The right to receive information in an accessible format – a requirement that airline websites be accessible and that accommodations be made in the airport for hearing and visually-impaired travelers.
4. The right to accessible airport facilities – a requirement for airports and airplanes to be physically navigable for disabled travelers.
5. The right to assistance at airports – a requirement that travelers receive help getting on and off the plane, and to and from the gate as needed.
6. The right to assistance on the aircraft – a requirement for airlines to allow pre-boarding for passengers who need extra time, and help getting to and from their seat if needed.
7. The right to travel with an assistive device or service animal – the requirement for these animals or devices to be accommodated onboard.
8. The right to receive seating accommodations – these can include a moveable armrest to ease access for wheelchair users, bulkhead seating to accommodate service animals or an adjoining seat for an assistant.
9. The right to accessible aircraft features – these include priority stowage for wheelchairs on larger aircraft, and at least one accessible bathroom on most planes in passenger service.
10. The right to resolution of a disability-related issue – a requirement that airlines make complaint resolution officials available at the passenger's request.

What is the requirement for families sitting together?

Although it's not an enforceable law, the DOT's [new policy](#) "urges" airlines to seat travelers 13 and younger with their guardians at no extra charge. This has been a more high-profile issue as [basic economy tickets](#), which usually do not include advanced seat selection, become more common.

Addressing consumer complaints

In the announcement, the DOT also acknowledged that [consumer complaints](#) against airlines are up 300% over pre-pandemic levels. The two largest categories for complaints are difficulty getting refunds and "flight problems" including cancellations and delays.

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HEADLINE	07/10 Macau shuts casinos, weeklong lockdown
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/macau-shuts-casinos-as-city-enters-weeklong-lockdown-11657460218?mod=hp_listb_pos4
GIST	<p>HONG KONG—The gambling enclave of Macau will enter a citywide lockdown early Monday, as authorities seek to contain a spiraling Covid-19 outbreak.</p> <p>Aside from essential services such as supermarkets, healthcare facilities and restaurants selling takeaway, all other businesses have been ordered to shut for a week, with residents required to stay at home. City officials urged the public not to panic-buy food, asking people to make purchases at staggered times to enable social distancing in queues.</p> <p>The order, issued Saturday by the territory's chief executive, Ho Iat-seng, comes as Macau struggles to contain an outbreak that had already shuttered venues such as cinemas, salons and swimming pools. The</p>

	<p>Chinese gambling hub has recorded hundreds of cases in recent weeks, its worst-ever outbreak after keeping to China's zero-Covid strategy for most of the pandemic.</p> <p>Previously, Mr. Ho had said that shutting down all casinos "would affect many employees," and as such the city's more than 40 casinos had been allowed to continue operations. Macau relies on the gambling sector for much of its economic growth and employment.</p> <p>Macau has a population of about 650,000. Throughout the pandemic, it has maintained strict Covid-containment measures. At one point, quarantine for travelers from what it deemed very high-risk countries was as long as 28 days.</p> <p>The lockdown order specified that all adults who needed to leave their homes would be required to wear masks of KN95-standard or above. Those who violated that order could be subject to jail time.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Ukraine war pushes millions into starvation
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-war-pushes-millions-of-the-worlds-poorest-toward-starvation-11657466470?mod=hp_lead_pos9
GIST	<p>MOGADISHU, Somalia—The young victims of an intensifying global food crisis are being buried in unmarked graves. In crowded malnutrition wards, families are waiting for one ailing child to be discharged before bringing in the next. Mothers return home empty-handed from dwindling food markets, where prices for some staples have doubled in recent months.</p> <p>The worst hunger emergency in a half-century is afflicting Somalia and some of the world's other poorest countries, where the effects of drawn-out conflicts and increasingly extreme weather are being exacerbated by the economic disruptions from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>The World Food Program says that increases in the cost of food and fuel since March have pushed an additional 47 million people into acute food insecurity, when a person is no longer able to consume enough calories to sustain her life and livelihood, taking the total to 345 million people world-wide. Of those, some 50 million are living on the edge of famine.</p> <p>In Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Yemen and Afghanistan, nearly 900,000 people already face starvation and death. That is a more than 10-fold increase from 2019—and, by some estimates, could result in more people dying from hunger in 2022 and 2023 than in any years since the 1960s and China's disastrous Great Leap Forward agricultural policies.</p> <p>Although global market prices for some foods, most notably grain, have dropped in recent weeks, people who study supply chains warn that it could take months for those decreases to filter down to hard-to-access countries, too late for thousands of families who are starving now. High fuel prices, meanwhile, continue to inflate the cost of everything from shipping food aid to trucking drinking water and, along with difficulties obtaining credit, are pushing local traders into bankruptcy.</p> <p>"The combination of factors that we have now, which we see most severely manifesting in countries like Somalia, could be the harbinger for what is coming on a bigger scale," said Alex de Waal, the executive director of Tufts University's World Peace Foundation. "And it is foreseeable and preventable." For his 2018 book, "Mass Starvation: The History and Future of Famine," he researched deaths from famines since the late 1870s.</p> <p>Among the early victims of the current crisis was 2-month-old Muad Abdi, who died late last month after a night of diarrhea and vomiting in a sprawling camp on the outskirts of Mogadishu.</p> <p>"His eyes turned up, and I felt he was no longer with me," said his mother, Hawa Abdi, looking down at the corrugated metal and sand that had been heaped on her baby's grave just minutes before a reporter and a photographer from The Wall Street Journal visited the camp.</p>

Muad's older brother, Abdirahman, 2 years old, was fighting an infection in a crowded hospital, his defenses weakened by severe malnutrition. His 1-year-old sister, Habiba, slumped limply on her mother's hip.

Until three months ago, Ms. Abdi said, the \$1 to \$2 a day her husband earned from occasional construction work bought two meals of rice and beans for the family of six. Now that money is barely enough for one daily meal of rice.

"Even the aid agencies said they don't have enough to give us because of the war in Ukraine," said Ms. Abdi, whose family fled to the camp in 2020, at the beginning of a drought that meteorologists say is Somalia's worst in four decades.

Humanitarian organizations warn that the Ukraine war is taking attention and resources from other crises, just as they face surging prices for goods they need to save lives. The cost of food the WFP provides for its aid programs has jumped 46% compared with 2019, driven by sharp increases in prices for vegetable oils, special nutritional pastes needed to treat malnourished children and transportation. Aid groups have cut their rations and the number of people who receive aid.

"We are taking the food from the mouths of the hungry to feed the starving," said El-Khidir Daloum, WFP's director for Somalia, a country of 16 million people where 7.1 million are facing acute food insecurity and 213,000 are living in famine-like conditions. The United Nations Children's Fund says severe malnutrition rates in Somali children under the age of 5 are higher now than in 2011-12, when more than a quarter-million Somalis died in the worst famine of the 21st century.

In Ethiopia and Sudan, the WFP last month reduced food aid to 1.2 million refugees to half of their daily nutritional requirements, citing a combined funding gap of \$529 million.

Those aid cuts and rising prices are hitting extra hard in countries such as Somalia, which because of its arid climate and an insurgency led by the al Qaeda-linked al-Shabaab terrorist group produces less than 10% of its food needs even in a good year, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization.

Domestic food production during the April-June harvest season was between 40% and 60% below its long-term average, the FAO estimates, while some three million heads of livestock have perished since mid-2021 as pastures dried up. Weather models signal that rains that normally come between October and December will likely also be below average this year, setting the stage for a record fifth consecutive failed rainy season.

In Mogadishu, the global food-supply crisis is more of a crisis of demand, with many Somalis not able to afford the goods they used to buy. Grain importers and market vendors say this dynamic has resulted in a catastrophic breakdown of a domestic supply chain that is built around credit and trust and that could have long-term consequences for how millions of Somalis access food.

At Mogadishu's Ansaloti food market, only a handful of shoppers roamed normally bustling aisles, and more than half of the stalls were empty. "Most of the other vendors have gone out of business," said Saido Ali, standing behind boxes of wilting spinach, bruised cherry tomatoes and small piles of spaghetti and linguine imported from Turkey.

One kilo of pasta, a popular staple in Somalia, now costs \$1.50, up from 70 cents a few months ago, said Ms. Ali. Cooking oil that she used to sell in 3-liter bottles is now packed in plastic bags less than one-tenth the size. Shoppers who used to pay for their purchases when they received their wages at the end of the month now have to pay on the spot.

Nonpayment of these common month-to-month loans is reverberating farther up in a supply chain that's already shaken by Russia's blocking of grain at Black Sea ports and by other countries' export restrictions. Adam Abdullahi, a grain importer in Mogadishu, says around 60% of his competitors have gone bankrupt

since 2020 as intermediaries defaulted and demand plummeted. Instead of the 6,000 40-foot containers of wheat flour, rice, cooking oil and sugar he imports in a regular year, he said he is now on track to reach 2,000. The cost of renting and shipping a container from Asia, meanwhile, has jumped to \$13,000 from \$4,000, he said.

“If the drought and export restrictions persist, we will also be gone,” said Mr. Abdullahi.

In the camp where little Muad is buried, new families fleeing the drought arrive every day, putting up igloo-shaped tents made from sticks and pieces of fabric. Among the latest arrivals were Arbo Ali and her six children. The youngest, 10-day-old Halima, lay listless in her mother’s arms.

Ms. Ali, 25, said she gave birth to Halima and her twin sister, who died after two days, without help on the way from southern Somalia, where the drought had killed the family’s 200 cattle. “I dug a hole and buried her,” Ms. Ali said. “I didn’t have time to give her a name.”

Ms. Ali said she was worried about Halima, who had a fever and stopped breast-feeding. Next to her, her 2-year old son, Abdirahman, cried from hunger, licking sand from his hand. Ms. Ali said she had no idea where her children’s next meal would come from. The last one was a small bowl of rice given by one of their camp neighbors the previous night.

“Some of the mothers put an empty pot on the fire just to give their children morale,” said Fatima Said of the U.K.-based aid group Human Appeal, which works in the camp. Because donations haven’t kept up with rising food prices and the growing number of people in need, Human Appeal recently cut its monthly handouts. Instead of 50 kilograms of rice and wheat flour for a family of six, it now gives just 25. Ten liters of cooking oil has been cut to three, and 2.5 kilograms of powdered milk has been lowered to 900 grams.

When the Journal reporter and photographer visited a small section of the sprawling camp, they saw three graves of children who had died within the previous 48 hours. Several mothers said they lost children on the journey from their rural homes. One woman watched her 8-year-old son die on the side of the road while her two other children, a boy and a girl ages 5 and 7, died within days of arriving at the camp.

“They were malnourished,” said the woman’s cousin, Hassan Kalmole. The woman herself, Arbo Hafow, was too distraught to speak.

Young children are most at risk of death from the effects of hunger. Lack of nutrients leaves their bodies too weak to fight off illnesses such as measles or cholera, which spread quickly in crowded migrant camps. Those who survive face long-term health problems, including delayed development and stunted growth, said Dr. Muhamed Osman, who runs Mogadishu’s Hamar Jajab Health Center.

In the center’s stabilization ward, Salma Roble, 30, cradled her 11-month-old daughter, Maida. Before the drought and rising food prices forced the family to skip more meals, Maida enjoyed crawling and playing with her five older siblings, said her mother. Now she was too weak to sit up.

When she was admitted a week ago with severe malnutrition made critical by a bout of gastritis, Maida weighed 11 pounds. Dr. Osman said a girl of her age and height should weigh around 22 pounds, and Maida needed to stay an extra week to be stable enough to go home.

Ms. Roble, however, was receiving increasingly urgent phone calls from her husband. Their second-youngest, 2-year old Mursal, was vomiting, suffering from diarrhea and getting weaker by the day. “I need to get back quickly to bring him,” she said.

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HEADLINE	07/10 Tech’s red-hot hiring spree signs of cooling
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SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/techs-red-hot-hiring-spree-shows-signs-of-cooling-11657445403?mod=hp_lead_pos2
GIST	<p>The tech industry's ultrarapid hiring during the pandemic is showing signs of cooling off, and a number of top executives are preparing for it to get worse.</p> <p>With fear of a recession looming, executives from high-profile tech companies have announced plans to slow hiring or cut jobs, and are in some cases warning employees to brace themselves for tougher times.</p> <p>Labor Department data issued Friday showed the economy adding technology jobs in June at a pace still faster than before the onset of Covid-19, but a bit slower in some areas than in prior months. Jobs in computer and electronic products grew by 2,300 from May, for example, down from an average of more than 2,800 in the prior five months of this year.</p> <p>"There is some slowing in hiring as fears of a significant downturn or recession are on the horizon," information-technology consulting firm Janco Associates Inc. wrote in a report on Friday's numbers, in which it projected the economy would add 196,000 IT jobs this year, down from about 213,000 last year.</p> <p>Twitter Inc. on Thursday said it laid off 30% of its talent acquisition team, adding to a string of layoffs by tech companies. Electric-vehicle maker Tesla Inc. late last month laid off about 200 people after earlier saying it would cut 10% of salaried staff—though Chief Executive Elon Musk also said last month that total head count, including blue-collar workers, would likely increase over the next 12 months.</p> <p>Netflix Inc. cut about 3% of its workforce as it deals with a loss in subscribers. Amazon.com Inc. also has looked to pare hiring in some areas, and videogame companies including Unity Software Inc. and GameStop Corp. have recently shed staff.</p> <p>Although the overall labor market remains tight, with strong demand for workers in some sectors and positions, warnings from some tech leaders heightened fears of a tough stretch ahead for a sector whose influence and power touch virtually every aspect of society.</p> <p>Snap Inc. CEO Evan Spiegel recently told staff the company would slow hiring and cautioned that the economy "has definitely deteriorated further and faster than we expected." CEO Mark Zuckerberg and other executives at Facebook-parent Meta Platforms Inc. have warned repeatedly in recent months that its business faces challenges, with Chief Product Officer Chris Cox last month emphasizing to employees the need for discipline and ruthless prioritization given headwinds the company faces, according to a spokeswoman.</p> <p>The jobs turnabout has been especially pronounced in certain niches hard hit by the market turbulence. Cryptocurrency-exchange operator Coinbase Global Inc. recently let go of 18% of its staff, and trading firm Robinhood Markets Inc. cut 9%. Online property brokerage Redfin Corp., whose staff grew by more than half in 2021, last month said it was laying off about 8% of its employees.</p> <p>"Companies were under great pressure to grow as fast as possible," said Glenn Kelman, CEO of Redfin, whose stock has fallen to \$9.50 as of Friday's close from nearly \$100 in February 2021. "Just to have a return to some normalcy, in some ways, that's a very painful transition. In other ways, it's really healthy and good." Mr. Kelman said he has worked to remind staff of the ups and downs of business climates, especially in the often-volatile real-estate sector.</p> <p>Recruiting companies and job sites say demand is still strong overall. Job postings for tech roles are outpacing other positions, according to data from jobs site ZipRecruiter. While job postings for software developers are up by 107% since before the Covid-19 pandemic, job search company Indeed reports, that number has dropped by 10 percentage points in the past four weeks.</p> <p>Economists say the shift in the job outlook so far is partly because tech companies that saw surging demand during the pandemic may have overshot expectations. Amazon and many of its peers added employees at an unprecedented pace. In the past five years, Meta, Apple Inc., Microsoft Corp. and Google</p>

	<p>parent Alphabet Inc. nearly doubled their combined number of full-time employees to a collective total of about 563,000.</p> <p>“Tech companies had a glory period where people were throwing money at them, and that is now over,” said Julia Pollak, chief economist at ZipRecruiter.</p> <p>Various factors this year have upended those dynamics. Inflation has run at a four-decade high, and U.S. economic output has fallen, showing signs of strain, though the job market has remained strong, with the jobless rate at 3.6% in June. Within tech, online advertising has fallen off for some of the biggest players and the war in Ukraine has created more uncertainty. Analysts have estimated advertising revenue at Meta to have zero growth on a year-over-year basis in the second quarter for the first time in the company’s history.</p> <p>The upshot is that the tech industry, at least for now, appears to be in correction mode rather than recession mode, said AnnElizabeth Konkell, an economist at Indeed. “Some employers, in this case in the tech industry, simply missed the mark of what they need in the next six months to a year,” she said.</p> <p>The share of employees with a negative business outlook in the tech industry rose to 14.6% in May, the highest level of pessimism since the start of the pandemic, according to company review site Glassdoor. On a networking platform owned by Glassdoor, discussions about layoffs have more than doubled since April.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/09 US cruise ships use Canada as toilet bowl
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jul/09/us-cruise-ships-using-canada-as-toilet-bowl-for-polluted-waste-alaska-british-columbia
GIST	<p>From the comfort of cruise ships, a typical trip to Alaska offers magnificent views of glaciers and untamed national parks, and visits to quaint seaside towns. For years, these draws have made cruises to Alaska the most booked US holiday.</p> <p>But the journey to those pristine areas, which involves sailing along Canada’s west coast for two or three days, is leaving behind a trail of toxic waste, including within marine protected areas (MPAs), according to new research.</p> <p>More than 31bn litres (8.5bn US gallons) a year of pollution is estimated to be discharged off the west coast of Canada by cruise ships on their way to and from Alaska, according to a report by the environmental organisations Stand.earth and West Coast Environmental Law (WCEL).</p> <p>“There’s this perverse incentive to treat Canada like a toilet bowl,” says Anna Barford, Canada shipping campaigner at Stand.earth. “They’re just using us like a highway and tossing stuff left, right and centre.”</p> <p>Across Canada’s 151,019 mile (243,042km) coastline, ships generate 147bn litres of harmful waste each year, equivalent to 59,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools, according to a March 2022 report by WWF-Canada. Based on data from more than 5,000 vessels, the report found cruise ships were the largest polluters, despite making up only 2% of the marine traffic analysed.</p> <p>Cruise ship pollution includes large volumes of toxic sewage from toilets, greywater from sinks, showers and laundries, and bilge water – the oily liquid that collects at the lowest part of a ship. By far the largest source of pollution identified in the WWF report was from so-called scrubbers – devices installed to remove exhaust gases such as sulphur oxide and nitrogen oxide, as well as particulates, from the heavy bunker oil used as marine fuel. The scrubbers create an acidic wastewater containing a cocktail of chemicals.</p>

On a one-week trip to [Alaska](#) and back along the Canadian coast, a cruise ship will generate nearly 200m litres of waste from scrubbers, according to the Stand.earth and WCEL report. While ships can decide whether to discharge at sea or within a port, most waste from scrubbers is dumped as it is generated.

Globally, cruise ships have a [patchy record](#) of maintaining environmental regulations, including [within Alaska](#), but the Pacific waters off the coast of British Columbia are particularly polluted. This is due to the many cruise ships but also because Canada's federal dumping regulations are [less stringent than the US laws](#), according to Michael Bissonnette, a lawyer from WCEL, particularly compared with regulations in Washington and Alaska – the two US states at each end of Canada's west coast.

In Washington, more than [6,000 sq km](#) (2,300 sq miles) of ocean habitat is protected in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound, near the Canadian border, and now classified as a [no-discharge zone](#). Alaska requires cruise ships to apply for and receive permission to discharge sewage and greywater.

These regulations encourage ships “to hold on to their waste when they're in American waters and then to dump it when they're in Canadian waters”, Bissonnette says.

In Canadian waters, untreated sewage from cruise ships can legally be dumped outside a 12-nautical mile limit under [vessel pollution regulations](#), which can often [overlap into critical habitats](#). Meanwhile, treated sewage – which includes the waste from toilets and greywater from sinks and laundries – can be discharged three nautical miles from shore.

Sigrid Kuehnemund, vice-president of wildlife and industry at WWF-Canada, says that while each federal MPA has its own regulations, in Canada very few prohibit operational waste discharges – all the waste that accumulates onboard when ships are running. “The regulations that are protecting MPAs at the moment sort of give the shipping industry a free pass, and there aren't clear regulations that would restrict dumping within those boundaries.”

There are efforts under way to tighten pollution rules. In April, on the eve of the new cruise ship season, the federal government department Transport Canada announced new [measures to limit discharges](#) of greywater and sewage from cruise ships operating in Canadian waters.

However, while welcome, the move is not enough, Bissonnette says, noting that the measures are voluntary and do not apply to scrubbers.

When released into the ocean, the wide array of toxic substances pose a significant threat to aquatic wildlife, and the habitat and food webs on which they depend, including threatened populations of sea otters and orcas that live off British Columbia's coast.

About 10% of scrubber washwater discharged from ships off British Columbia occurred [within critical habitats of orcas](#), according to an analysis by the International Council on Clean Transportation. Of particular alarm, says Kuehnemund, is the threat to wildlife in Scott Islands marine national park, a cluster of five islands off the north-western tip of Vancouver Island. This [protected area](#) is subject to the highest amount of pollution from cruise ship dumping, according to WWF's report.

Lying on a busy route for cruise ships, the park holds some of the largest rookeries of Steller sea lions in the world. Each spring, more than 1 million seabirds – including 90% of Canada's tufted puffins and half of the world's Cassin's auklets – breed on the island's cliffs. Kuehnemund describes the area as “a biodiversity hotspot”.

There is fear in some coastal communities that as cruise ship traffic increases, so too will the threat to their waters. Popular port destinations including [Victoria](#) and [Seattle](#) have seen protests at the return of cruise ships after the lifting of pandemic restrictions.

The fishing communities of south-east Alaska also complain of dumped waste in their waters bordering Canada, fearing that critical fish species are being exposed to harmful substances.

	<p>One fisherman, Mark Severson, recalls in the summer of 2019 sailing through miles of foamy yellow waters in Petersburg, a small island community about 30 miles from the Canadian border and a popular port along the Alaska cruise route. Since then, Severson and his wife, Karen, have been advocating for stronger monitoring of waste dumping on cruise ships.</p> <p>“The passengers that love the Alaska cruise do not even realise that the ships are polluting our pristine parts of the world,” he says.</p> <p>With the new pollution measures in place, a spokesperson for Transport Canada said: “Canada is among the countries with the most stringent requirements for these types of discharges in the world.” The department said it recognised concerns regarding scrubber waste in Canadian waters and was working to develop approaches that could reduce discharge.</p> <p>But Barford argues that only when Canada implements mandatory regulations will the problem of cruise ship pollution be tackled. “It’s a terrible way to say goodbye to a community that you’ve just visited,” she says. “Waving from the back as the ship empties out its tank. This is not something I would want to leave behind.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/09 Mykolaiv leader uses jokes to resist Putin
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/09/jokes-are-strategic-how-mykolaivs-leader-uses-humour-to-resist-putin
GIST	<p>When Russian president Vladimir Putin ordered his troops to invade Ukraine on 24 February, Vitaliy Kim was still in bed sound asleep.</p> <p>“I was dreaming something, but can’t remember what, and when I woke up, everybody was panicking,” said Kim, 41, governor of the industrial region of Mykolaiv. “It was frightening. People were asking me what to do now.”</p> <p>A few frantic hours later, after a Russian missile struck the local airport about nine miles from his office, Kim, who had been a successful developer, was already dressed in military clothes and ready to go to war.</p> <p>From that moment on, the region of Mykolaiv would be hit by daily missile strikes. But while Moscow’s troops advanced towards its cities, with each blast Kim grew increasingly popular, one joke at a time.</p> <p>His mockery of Russian forces released in his daily video messages on Telegram and on his social channels, even when the enemy was dangerously close to the city, went viral and turned into memes. His face, printed on T-shirts, quickly became a symbol of the country’s resistance against the world’s largest nation.</p> <p>“Somehow, jokes are strategic,” he said in an interview with the <i>Observer</i>. “They’re useful to civilians and military personnel. With this mockery, I’m trying to show that the Russian army is made of common people who make mistakes.”</p> <p>From the first day, Mykolaiv, in the southern half of Ukraine, became a primary target for the Russians to reach their goal to annex the country’s Black Sea coast. In March, Moscow had practically encircled the city and its port on the Buh River. Its forces had seized Mykolaiv’s airport and were advancing from the north-east, with citizens piling up tyres and making molotov cocktails in preparation for street fighting.</p> <p>One day, while Russian artillery was pounding the city with rockets and old Soviet missiles, Kim posted a photo on his Telegram channel showing the component from an antiquated Krug anti-aircraft missile system, designed in 1957, which had been found by rescue workers.</p>

Below the image, he added: “I’m no weapons expert, but I feel like they’ll start throwing balalaikas at us soon,” referring to a typical Russian stringed musical instrument. And just when it seemed the city was falling into Russian hands, Kim, to instil calm among the population, published a photo of himself in his office with his feet on a desk wearing gaudy socks. The image went viral immediately, with a doctored version of Kim sitting with his feet on [Putin’s imposingly long table](#).

Kim’s ability to joke in the face of horror and fear has contributed to reassuring Ukrainians and alleviating their desperation. In an odd twist, his way of dealing with such trauma can be translated with a phrase attributed to the Russian revolutionary anarchist Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin: “A laugh will bury you all.”

“It wasn’t hard to reunite Ukrainians when the war started. They did it in one day”, said Kim, whose father was a basketball coach of Korean ancestry. “It was that easy. Because to their eyes, Russia is not just an army, it’s a true evil that is destroying everything in its path. They rape, kill and kidnap people. It was that easy to reunite in order to fight them back. Throughout our history, we have been fighting for our independence. The fight for freedom is in our DNA now.”

Indeed, [Mykolaiv residents managed to fight the Russians](#), becoming one of the most courageous strongholds on the southern front despite the fact that some believe it was inhabited by numerous pro-Russians.

“That’s not true,” Kim replied. “There couldn’t be any pro-Russians. Who would support a country that’s not a democracy? What was here were many pro-Soviet Union types.”

Mykolaiv has paid a heavy price for five months of war and resistance. Many of its citizens have been killed, and about 40% of its population has fled, leaving the city a virtual ghost town. The few people on the streets are mainly elderly. For more than a month there was no water after a pipeline had been destroyed. A humanitarian aid point has been set up in a crumbling 200-year-old theatre and concert hall, which provides clothes, shoes and medicines.

Missiles shake the city on a daily basis. As the *Observer* talked to Kim, two Russian cruise missiles cut through the sky. “Welcome to Mykolaiv,” said a smiling soldier. “The Russians are actually late today,” he added.

After the [Russians captured the Luhansk region](#), which along with Donetsk makes up the eastern Donbas, local authorities in Mykolaiv are bracing for an intensification of attacks.

“The battle over the south of Ukraine is still ahead of us and this is inevitable,” said [Roman Kostenko](#), a member of Ukraine’s parliament and a special forces commander, who on day one of the war swapped his suit and tie for a uniform and hurried to Mykolaiv’s frontline. Mykolaiv, which borders the vital Black Sea port of Odesa, is regarded by Moscow as a strategic target to reach its goal to annex Ukraine’s Black Sea coast, making Ukraine a landlocked country.

“The Kremlin’s primary target was to take over the south and the east, and to return Ukraine into its sphere of influence,” said Kostenko. “But we didn’t let them, and that’s why they had to alter their plans and concentrate their major force in the east. Their target is to take our sea away from us. They announced that these are their ‘indigenous territories’. They will try to reach the Transnistria border because Russia created many of those quasi-republics such as DNR, LNR, Abkhazia, South Osetia and Transnistria. They are trying to connect them.

“But the thing is, this cruel war is not even about a temporary loss of territories. It’s about our people being killed, women, children. Ask Vitaliy Kim – he will show you what Russia did to the government building.”

On 29 March, a Russian cruise missile struck Mykolaiv’s regional administration centre, leaving dozens trapped under debris: 38 people died in the attack. This is where Kim meets reporters for interviews,

	<p>alongside the damaged building. The missile left a gaping hole and sent office furniture flying metres away. The interior walls and hundreds of documents are still bloodstained.</p> <p>Russian forces waited until people arrived for work in the morning before targeting the site. Kim was supposed to be there, too, but that morning had overslept.</p> <p>Kim has practised taekwondo for much of his life. “Taekwondo is about discipline and achieving your goals,” he said. “You can apply this system in everyday life and in war too.”</p> <p>Before being suspended as honorary president of the International Judo Federation, Putin – a judo black belt – co-authored a book titled <i>Judo: History, Theory, Practice</i>.</p> <p>Many Ukrainians and Kim’s fans wonder who would prevail in a martial arts battle between the two. “I never thought about this,” said Kim smiling.</p> <p>Then, pointing his finger at the skeleton of the government building destroyed by the Russian troops, he added: “But looking at what he did to us, I wouldn’t fight him in a ring. I would just take a gun and shoot him.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Germany braces for Russia gas flow cutoff
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/10/germany-russia-gas-flow-permanent-halt-nord-stream-1-maintenance
GIST	<p>Germany is bracing itself for a potentially permanent halt to the flow of Russian gas from Monday when maintenance work begins on the Nord Stream 1 pipeline that brings the fuel to Europe’s largest economy via the Baltic Sea.</p> <p>The work on the 759-mile (1,220km) pipeline is an annual event and requires the gas taps to be closed for 10 to 14 days. But never before in the pipeline’s decade-long history has Germany seriously been asking whether the flow will begin again.</p> <p>Robert Habeck, Germany’s economy minister, has not shied away from addressing the government’s concerns. On Saturday, he spoke of the “nightmare scenario” that could occur.</p> <p>“Everything is possible, everything can happen,” Habeck told the broadcaster Deutschlandfunk. “It could be that the gas flows again, maybe more than before. It can also be the case that nothing comes.</p> <p>“We need to honestly prepare for the worst-case scenario and do our best to try to deal with the situation.” Contingency plans are rapidly being drawn up across Germany, where there are genuine concerns that Moscow may use the opportunity to further weaponise gas as a lever against the west in its war with Ukraine and permanently turn off supplies.</p> <p>Russian gas is vital to the running of Germany’s economy as well as keeping the majority of homes warm. Flows through the pipeline have been reduced in recent months and are at about 40% of the usual levels. Russia has blamed sanctions for the reduced flow, arguing they have hindered its access to spare parts.</p> <p>On Saturday, Canada said after consultation with Germany and the International Energy Agency that it would issue a temporary exemption to sanctions against Russia in order to allow the return from Montreal of a repaired Russian turbine that is required for the maintenance work to be carried out.</p> <p>On Friday, the Kremlin said it would increase gas supplies to Europe once the turbine was returned to Russia. Ukraine has objected to this, arguing it helps continue the continent’s dependency on Russian gas. But Canada’s natural resources minister, Jonathan Wilkinson, said the permission is “time-limited” and will help “Europe’s ability to access reliable and affordable energy as they continue to transition away from Russian oil and gas”.</p>

Since the start of the war in February, Germany has been working to [reduce its dependence](#) on Russian gas, including through the construction of liquefied natural gas (LNG) ports.

On Friday, emergency legislation completed its passage through both houses of parliament to allow the reactivation of mothballed coal power plants, despite their carbon intensity.

But the overall withdrawal process has been complex and slow.

The short-term goal is to [attempt to replenish stocks](#) in Germany's gas storage facilities to last the winter. The most recent reading, released by the Federal Network Agency on Friday, showed storage facilities to be at 63% capacity. The goal is 90% by 1 November.

The longer-term target is to lessen dependency on gas by increasing the generation of renewable energy, in part by redefining the sectors as being of vital importance to national security.

German industry and households consume about two-thirds of the country's gas supplies.

Plans are already in place to prioritise who would have access to gas in case of a cut. Hospitals and emergency services top the list, while households are ranked above most industrial concerns.

But on a more local level, as authorities battle with rising energy costs and the challenge of how to cope if households are left in the cold this winter, contingency plans are in place involving everything from shutting swimming pools, turning off street lamps and traffic lights, and housing citizens in industrial-scale dormitories. Not long ago destined for coronavirus patients, the makeshift containers have been described as "warm rooms" or "warmth islands".

Meanwhile, demand for everything that heats without gas is at an unprecedented high, including electric and oil heaters, infrared panels and convectors, as well as basic camping stoves.

Installers of wood-burning ovens and heat pumps report long waiting lists and cite a chronic lack of parts, as well as a shortage of qualified personnel.

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HEADLINE	07/10 Day 137 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/10/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-137-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Canada has granted a sanctions exemption to allow a repaired Russian turbine to be sent back to Germany for the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline. The Canadian government said the "time-limited and revocable permit" would support "Europe's ability to access reliable and affordable energy as they continue to transition away from Russian oil and gas". Canada also announced it would expand sanctions against Russia's energy sector to include industrial manufacturing. Kyiv urged the Canadian government not to return the part to Germany, but Germany, which is facing severe gas shortages, is being threatened with a further squeeze on Russian gas by Moscow if the turbine isn't returned.• Serhiy Bratchuk, a spokesperson for the Odesa regional military administration, said Russian forces were "purposefully" destroying crops in the Kherson region. He said fires occurred in the fields every day from shelling, and added: "Russian troops do not allow locals to put out fires, destroying granaries and equipment."• Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelenskiy has fired his ambassadors to Germany, India, the Czech Republic, Norway and Hungary, without giving further details as to why. Zelenskiy has urged his diplomats to drum up international support and high-end weapons to slow Russia's advance. It was not immediately clear whether the envoys would be handed new jobs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zelenskiy said on Saturday night the Russian army had attacked the cities of Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, Kryvy Rih, and communities of Zaporizhzhia region, covering a broad swathe of the country. • Russia is moving forces across the country and assembling them near Ukraine for future offensive operations, according to the UK ministry of defence. The latest intelligence update said a large proportion of the new infantry units were “probably” deploying with MT-LB armoured vehicles taken from long-term storage. • The governor of the Luhansk region said Russian forces were creating “hell” in shelling the eastern region of Donetsk. Serhiy Haidai said Russian forces fired eight artillery shells, three mortar shells and launched nine rocket strikes overnight. • At least five people were killed on Saturday, and seven others injured, by renewed Russian shelling in Donetsk, Ukraine officials said. A missile attack in Druzhkivka, northern Donetsk, tore apart a supermarket. • US secretary of state Antony Blinken said his country’s “commitment to the people of Ukraine is resolute” while announcing more than \$360m in additional aid. • The United Nations said Ukraine’s armed forces bore a large, and perhaps equal, share of the blame for an assault at a nursing home in Luhansk, where dozens of elderly and disabled patients were trapped inside without water or electricity. At least 22 of the 71 patients survived, but the exact number killed remains unknown. A few days before the attack, Ukrainian soldiers took up positions inside the nursing home, making the building a target, the UN said. • Kira Rudik, a Ukrainian MP with the centrist Golos party, said rockets struck central Kharkiv, injuring and hospitalising four civilians, including a child. • The first cohort of Ukrainian soldiers arrived in the UK to be trained in combat by British forces. The programme will train up to 10,000 Ukrainians over the coming months to give volunteer recruits with little to no military experience the skills to be effective in frontline combat.
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HEADLINE	07/09 Yosemite wildfire threatens giant sequoias
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/07/09/wildfire-yosemite-sequoias/
GIST	<p>A wildfire burning near the southern part of Yosemite National Park’s Mariposa Grove has become the latest blaze to threaten the world’s largest trees, which have been repeatedly imperiled in recent years as climate change increases the intensity of fires.</p> <p>The grove, home to more than 500 mature giant sequoias, closed Thursday after visitors reported spotting smoke from the Washburn Fire near a trail. About 1,600 people — almost all tourists — evacuated the next day from the nearby community of Wawona, Calif., and its campground.</p> <p>No injuries, destroyed structures or critical damage to the sequoias had been reported as of Saturday morning, said Nancy Phillippe, a spokeswoman for Yosemite fire information. All the named trees, including the 209-foot Grizzly Giant and the Bachelor and Three Graces, remained safe.</p> <p>“That is one of the main priorities, is protecting that grove and all the history that’s associated with it,” Phillippe said.</p> <p>Sequoia trees, which are native to only the Sierra Nevada and can live for about 3,000 years, have been increasingly endangered by worsening blazes in the past few summers. Although they’re used to frequent wildfires, three fires since 2020 have killed 13 to 19 percent of all sequoias. Natural resource experts expect that another large-scale die-off is possible this year.</p> <p>The Washburn Fire poses yet another threat. Its origin is under investigation, and Phillippe said there were no obvious weather-related causes.</p> <p>Firefighters were using a variety of tools to protect the grove Saturday as the uncontained fire expanded to more than 700 acres, Phillippe said. Engines were spraying the sequoias with hoses and building hand lines,</p>

a type of fire line constructed with hand tools, to create fuel breaks. Crews were also covering sequoias in [fireproof aluminum wrap](#).

High temperatures and low humidity forecast for this weekend are set to complicate firefighting efforts, which already have been made difficult by numerous downed trees, Phillipe said. Trees destroyed by bark beetles, killed by climate-change-induced drought and felled by a major windstorm serve as fuel for flames.

Prescribed burns conducted periodically in Mariposa Grove in the past several years have helped slow the progress of unwanted fires, Phillipe said. In wildfire-prone areas, [controlled burns](#) get rid of fuel and clear space for firefighters to work.

Mariposa Grove, located near Yosemite's south entrance, closed in 2015 and reopened three years later after [a \\$40 million restoration project](#) — the largest in the park's history. The initiative restored sequoia habitat, realigned roads and added a shuttle service from the arrival area.

After all that work, Phillipe said, park employees are not giving up on protecting the grove.

"We're suppressing this fire," she said. "We're doing everything we can to put it out."

Last year, the trees in California's Sequoia National Park were [imperiled by the KNP Complex Fire](#) when the lightning-sparked blaze came dangerously close to the 275-foot General Sherman, the largest tree in the world by volume. The Castle Fire in 2020 [burned one-third of the region's sequoia groves](#).

Nearly 23,000 acres [have been scorched by wildfires](#) in California this year.

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HEADLINE	07/09 US to end 4-decade old Hungary tax treaty
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2022/07/09/hungary-treaty-yellen-tax/
GIST	<p>The Biden administration on Friday said it will terminate its four-decade-old tax treaty with Hungary over that country's resistance to implementing a global minimum tax, as the United States seeks to create a global tax floor for large multinational corporations.</p> <p>In a statement on Friday, the Treasury Department said the United States is ending the treaty with Hungary because "the benefits are no longer reciprocal," citing a loss of tax revenue for the United States and little return for American investment in the country. Hungary, which has one of the lowest corporate tax rates in Europe, is currently blocking the European Union's implementation of the global minimum tax agreement. World leaders have agreed on a 15 percent corporate tax floor, championed as a top priority by Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen. Hungary's corporate tax rate is 9 percent. Each country in the European Union has veto power over the bloc's tax agreements, and every other E.U. member country supports the proposal.</p> <p>"The United States, across administrations, has had long-held concerns with Hungary's tax system and the Hungary treaty," the Treasury statement said. "We discussed these concerns with Hungary starting last fall, but are taking this step due to a lack of satisfactory action by Hungary to remedy these concerns."</p> <p>An analysis by the Treasury Department said the treaty unilaterally benefits Hungary. When the treaty was agreed to, Hungary's tax rate was 50 percent; it is now 9 percent — less than half the U.S. rate.</p> <p>Tax treaties are designed to help residents of countries that have signed them avoid paying taxes on the same income to both nations and to resolve other potentially complicated tax situations.</p> <p>The Biden administration has said the new global minimum tax will help states fund social programs and escape a mutually damaging "race to the bottom" by competing for business by lowering corporate tax</p>

rates. Those efforts have largely unified countries in the European Union, with Yellen and her partners winning over holdouts such as Ireland and Poland.

But Hungary's resistance has become the latest major roadblock to implementing the plan, with Hungarian officials warning that the measure will hurt investment and growth in their country. The Washington Post [previously reported](#) that Republican lawmakers, who also oppose the global tax deal, are working with senior officials in the Hungarian government.

"No matter how much pressure we are under ... we do not risk the jobs of tens of thousands of Hungarians," Peter Szijarto, Hungary's foreign minister, said in a Facebook post on Saturday. "We continue professional consultations on tax affairs with our Republican friends."

The news that the tax treaty would be terminated was first reported [by Reuters](#).

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HEADLINE	07/10 Sri Lanka president, PM stepping down?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/10/sri-lanka-protests-gotabaya-rajabaksa-resignation/
GIST	<p>COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Political parties in Sri Lanka met Sunday morning, facing intense pressure to quickly form an interim government after the country's president and prime minister agreed to step down following fierce anti-government protests.</p> <p>No fresh protests were reported in Colombo but people thronged the president's home seized by protesters the previous day, picnicking in the gardens and swimming in the pool.</p> <p>Nuwan Bopege, a volunteer associated with the protest movement, told The Post the protesters will occupy the homes of the two leaders until they formally resign.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of people flooded the streets of Colombo this weekend to demand President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's ouster over disastrous economic policies that have driven the country to collapse.</p> <p>On Saturday, angry crowds stormed the presidential residence and office, and celebrated their victory by diving into the swimming pool and lounging on his bed. By nighttime Rajapaksa had conveyed his decision to resign on July 13 to the parliamentary speaker. He had moved out of his home a day ahead of the protests, and his whereabouts remain unknown.</p> <p>Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe too offered to resign to quell growing unrest, but his offer did not placate irate protesters who set his home ablaze.</p> <p>The announcements of the resignation offers marked a major win for the protesters but plunged the island nation into political turmoil over what happens next.</p> <p>"This was a failed president and a failed government," said Faiszer Musthapha, a member of an opposition party that previously allied with Rajapaksa.</p> <p>He said the long-suffering people of the country had taken control. "It was the might of the people on show," he said.</p> <p>"It is a historic moment," said Harini Amarasuriya, an opposition member of Parliament, "where a true citizen's struggle ended the rule of an unpopular and untrustworthy government."</p> <p>At an all-party meeting Saturday night, lawmakers decided to form an interim government until elections can take place. Discussions are underway to appoint a prime minister before the resignation of the president on Wednesday.</p>

“We can now move into a more acceptable long-term trajectory for the country and for the international community,” said Eran Wickremesinghe, a leader of the main opposition party.

The United States was tracking developments in Sri Lanka closely, Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters in Thailand Sunday, urging the country’s political leaders to quickly “identify and implement solutions” for long-term economic stability and address people’s discontent.

Blinken said the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine was being felt everywhere and “may have contributed” to the crisis in Sri Lanka. The war in Ukraine pushed up global energy and food prices making it impossible for the nearly bankrupt country to import what it needs, exacerbating its economic struggle.

“Sri Lanka would be in crisis even if you didn’t have a war in Ukraine, but it’s compounding everything,” Alan Keenan, an analyst at the International Crisis Group consultancy told The Post in April. “This is the Ukraine effect: a credit line for fuel you thought could last two months now lasts one. Even if you get a bailout, you’re buying less food, less fuel, less medicine.”

Even as the opposition tries to build consensus on next steps, the situation remains volatile as people’s patience has run out and with no quick fixes available.

In May, similar large-scale protests led to the resignation of Rajapaksa’s older brother Mahinda as prime minister and other family members. But the president hung on, appointing a former prime minister to head a new government.

The anger over continued economic distress spilled over again, this time in greater force. Recent weeks have been marked by severe fuel shortages, lengthy power cuts and skyrocketing food prices. The extraordinary circumstances forced authorities to shut down schools and offices and ask government workers to grow food in backyards.

The signs of acute distress are apparent everywhere — in the miles-long lines at gas stations, where it can take up to three days to reach the front, and the desperate attempts by asylum seekers to reach Australia by sea.

Experts say Sri Lanka is experiencing stagflation – a period marked by slow growth and high unemployment accompanied by rising prices. The current negative growth could touch minus 4-6 percent later this year, some forecasts suggest, worse than the Covid hit to the economy in 2020.

Sri Lanka has been in bailout talks with international lenders, but continuing political instability threatens to jeopardize that process.

Manjuka Fernandopulle, a lawyer specializing in debt restructuring, said creditors would like to deal with a government that is “credible and legitimate” and can “deliver on the promised reform.”

Local media reported that the [International Monetary Fund](#) said it hopes for an early resolution so that talks may resume on a bailout package. Ganeshan Wignaraja, an economist at ODI, a U.K.-based global affairs think tank who has been involved in the IMF discussions described the economic situation as “hugely challenging.”

The first step forward for Sri Lanka is the IMF program, Wignaraja said, which will include “higher taxes, raising interest rates to stabilize inflation and cutting down on public subsidies like electricity and power.”

“Step two is economic reforms [such as] lowering barriers to foreign investors,” he said. “My biggest fear is this could be a lost decade and all the gain made in poverty reduction could be reversed.”

Aid groups say nearly a quarter of the country's 22 million residents are in need of [food assistance](#). Many have resorted to eating less or skipping meals altogether. Countries like India and Australia have sent humanitarian aid such as food and medicines.

Now with the imminent ouster of the president, many Sri Lankans are hopeful of things turning around. Namal Ratnayake, 40, was part of the protesting crowd that marched toward the president's office. The last few months had been devastating for the a wedding photographer, with income drying up and no fuel to get around for assignments.

"We had to oust these corrupt people who have brought us down to our knees," Ratnayake said. "My demand is that we have honest and educated people appointed from the present parliament to take us out of this immediate mess."

At the presidential residence, celebrations by the jubilant crowd continued.

Visuals from local media showed a stream of visitors walking through an [imposing stairway](#) at the president's home. Announcements were made to not steal or harm the property. Some collected trash and cleaned up debris.

In a large conference room, people enacted a [discussion](#) with the IMF while a young man played the Rajapaksa [campaign song](#) on the president's piano to loud cheers.

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HEADLINE	07/10 Millions of Muslims celebrate Eid
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/10/eid-al-adha-photos-world-celebrations/
GIST	<p>Millions of Muslims around the world are celebrating Eid al-Adha — a major Islamic holiday that marks the end of the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia — as the easing of coronavirus restrictions allows worshipers to gather.</p> <p>President Biden called the festivities a “symbol of the progress we have made in fighting” the coronavirus but warned that the pandemic is not over yet.</p> <p>“While COVID-19 restrictions remain, Muslims draped in white will be able to gather from around the world for the first time in two years to perform the Hajj,” Biden said in a statement Saturday.</p> <p>“It’s a symbol of the progress we have made in fighting this pandemic and of all work we must still do to strengthen our recovery. Let us all take this opportunity to renew our shared commitment to work for peace, care for the vulnerable, and pursue greater equality and opportunity for all people,” Biden added.</p> <p>Even as many countries have loosened public health restrictions, coronavirus cases have continued to rise around the world, a surge driven largely by sub-variants of omicron.</p> <p>Globally, more than 4.6 million new cases were reported to the World Health Organization between June 27 and July 3. The WHO says new cases in Southeast Asia — which under the agency’s classification includes countries with some of the largest Muslim populations in the world, including Indonesia, India and Bangladesh — grew by 20 percent between June 27 and July 3.</p> <p>In some parts of the world, Eid celebrations were restricted last year because of the pandemic, with strict limits on the number of worshipers allowed into Mecca.</p> <p>This year, Saudi authorities have allowed about 850,000 Muslims from abroad to make the pilgrimage. They were chosen via a lottery and were required to be no older than 65, vaccinated against the coronavirus and to have recently tested negative for the virus.</p>

While Saudi Arabia has softened its national mask mandate, masks are still [required inside Mecca and Medina](#), and some restrictions are in place around the Kaaba, the shrine at the center of the Great Mosque of Mecca.

Outside Saudi Arabia, Muslims celebrate Eid al-Adha with prayers and large gatherings of family and friends. The festival is joyful and a chance to share a meal with loved ones.

Many Muslims sacrifice animals — [including sheep, goats, cows and camels](#) — to mark the Quranic story of the willingness of Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Ishmael as an act of obedience to God, before God intervened and gave him a lamb to sacrifice instead.

The tradition on one of Islam's two main festivals is to share the meat among family, friends and those in need.

Even in Ukraine, as [war with Russia rages](#), Muslims marked Eid al-Adha in mosques.

In Russia, photos show large-scale public prayers taking place under the watchful eye of security forces.

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HEADLINE	07/10 Risk of coronavirus reinfection grows
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/07/10/omicron-variant-ba5-covid-reinfection/
GIST	<p>America has decided the pandemic is over. The coronavirus has other ideas.</p> <p>The latest omicron offshoot, BA.5, has quickly become dominant in the United States, and thanks to its elusiveness when encountering the human immune system, is driving a wave of cases across the country.</p> <p>The size of that wave is unclear because most people are testing at home or not testing at all. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the past week has reported a little more than 100,000 new cases a day on average. But infectious-disease experts know that wildly underestimates the true number, which may be as many as a million, said Eric Topol, a professor at Scripps Research who closely tracks pandemic trends.</p> <p>Antibodies from vaccines and previous covid infections offer limited protection against BA.5, leading Topol to call it “the worst version of the virus that we’ve seen.”</p> <p>Other experts point out that, despite being hit by multiple rounds of ever-more-contagious omicron subvariants, the country has not yet seen a dramatic spike in hospitalizations. About 38,000 people were hospitalized nationally with covid as of Friday, according to data compiled by The Washington Post. That figure has been steadily rising since early March, but remains far below the record 162,000 patients hospitalized with covid in mid-January. The average daily death toll on Friday stood at 329 and has not changed significantly over the past two months.</p> <p>There is widespread agreement among infectious-disease experts that this remains a dangerous virus that causes illnesses of unpredictable severity — and they say the country is not doing enough to limit transmission.</p> <p>Restrictions and mandates are long gone. Air travel is nearly back to pre-pandemic levels. Political leaders aren’t talking about the virus — it’s virtually a nonissue on the campaign trail. Most people are done with masking, social distancing, and the pandemic generally. They’re taking their chances with the virus.</p> <p>“It’s the wild west out there,” said Ziyad Al-Aly, an epidemiologist at Washington University in St. Louis. “There are no public health measures at all. We’re in a very peculiar spot, where the risk is vivid and it’s out there, but we’ve let our guard down and we’ve chosen, deliberately, to expose ourselves and make ourselves more vulnerable.”</p>

Angela Rasmussen, a virologist at the University of Saskatchewan, would like to see more money for testing and vaccine development, as well as stronger messaging from the Biden administration and top health officials. She was dismayed recently on a trip to southern California, where she saw few people wearing masks in the airport. “This is what happens when you don’t have politicians and leaders taking a strong stand on this,” she said.

The CDC said it has urged people to monitor [community transmission](#), “stay up to date on vaccines, and take appropriate precautions to protect themselves and others.”

Nearly one-third of the U.S. population lives in counties rated as having “high” transmission levels by the CDC. Cases are rising especially in the South and West.

Many people now see the pandemic as [part of the fabric of modern life](#) rather than an urgent health emergency. Some of that is simply a widespread [recalibration of risk](#). This is not the [spring of 2020](#) anymore. Few people remain immunologically naive to the virus. They may still get infected, but the immune system — primed by vaccines or previous bouts with the virus — generally has deeper layers of defense that prevent severe disease.

But the death rate from covid-19 is still much higher than the mortality from influenza or other contagious diseases. Officials have warned of a possible fall or winter wave — perhaps as many as [100 million infections](#) in the United States — that could flood hospitals with covid patients. Beyond the direct suffering of such a [massive outbreak](#), there could be [economic disruptions](#) as tens of millions of people become too sick to work.

“It feels as though everyone has given up,” said Mercedes Carnethon, an epidemiologist at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

Carnethon said she also isn’t as cautious as she used to be. She wears a high-quality mask on airplanes, but doesn’t wear a mask at the gym. She is worried that she’ll contract covid again — she caught it during [the omicron wave](#) last winter. But she doesn’t think a “zero covid” strategy is plausible.

“I feel there is a very limited amount that I can do individually, short of stopping my life,” Carnethon said. “It’s risky. I’ll be catching covid at an inconvenient time. I can hope it is milder than the first time I caught it.”

Many experts concerned about ongoing transmission have also pushed back against online fearmongering and apocalyptic warnings about the virus; people are not routinely getting infected every two or three weeks, Rasmussen said.

Population-level immunity is one reason the virus remains in [mutational overdrive](#). The risk of [reinfections has increased](#) because newly emergent subvariants are better able to evade the front line defense of the immune system, and there is essentially no effort at the community level to limit transmission.

Al-Aly, who is also chief of research and development at Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System, has scoured the VA’s vast database to see what happened to the nearly 39,000 patients infected with the coronavirus for a second or third time. What he found was sobering. In a [paper](#) posted online last month, but not yet peer-reviewed or published in a journal, Al-Aly and his co-authors reported that people with multiple infections have a higher cumulative risk of a severe illness or death.

It’s not that the later illnesses are worse than, or even as bad as, earlier cases. But any coronavirus infection carries risk, and the risk of a really bad outcome — a heart attack, for example — builds cumulatively, like a plaque, as infections multiply.

“Reinfection adds risk,” he said. “You’re rolling the dice again. You’re playing Russian roulette.”

[Vaccination](#) remains an important, if still underused, weapon against the virus — even if it’s not that effective at stopping new infections.

Omicron [blew through](#) the largely vaccinated population last winter with [stunning ease](#), and since then the subvariants have arrived in rapid succession, starting with [BA.2](#) and [BA.2.12.1](#) in the spring, and now BA.5 and its nearly identical relative BA.4.

Vaccines are based on the original strain of the virus that [emerged in Wuhan, China](#) in late 2019. The Food and Drug Administration [has asked](#) vaccine makers to come up with [new formulas](#) that target BA.5 and BA.4. Those boosters could be ready this fall.

But there is no guarantee that these latest subvariants will still be dominant four or five months from now. The virus is not only evolving, it’s doing so with remarkable speed. The virus may continually outrace the vaccines.

“I worry that by the time we have a vaccine for BA.5 we’ll have a BA.6 or a BA.7. This virus keeps outsmarting us,” Al-Aly said.

“We are in a very difficult position with regard to the choice of vaccine for the fall because we’re dealing with a notoriously moving target,” Anthony S. Fauci, President Biden’s top adviser for the pandemic, told The Post in June, a few days before he, too, announced that he was sick with the virus.

Already there’s another omicron subvariant that has caught the attention of virologists: BA.2.75. First seen last month in India, it has been identified in a smattering of other countries, including the United States. But it’s too soon to know whether it will overtake BA.5 as the dominant variant.

There is no evidence that the new forms of the virus result in different symptoms or severity of disease. Omicron and its many offshoots — including BA.5 — typically replicate higher in the respiratory tract than earlier forms of the virus. That is one theory for why omicron has seemed less likely to cause severe illness.

It’s also unclear if these new variants will alter the risk of a person contracting the long-duration symptoms generally known as “[long covid](#).” The percentage of people with severely debilitating symptoms is likely between 1 and 5 percent — amounting to millions of people in this country, according to Harlan Krumholz, a Yale University professor of medicine.

His colleague, Akiko Iwasaki, a professor of immunology and expert on long covid, said in an email that she believes the world is not sufficiently vigilant about the disease anymore. She is often the only person masking in a crowd, she said.

“I understand the pandemic fatigue, but the virus is not done with us,” she said. “I fear that the current human behavior is leading to more people getting infected and acquiring long covid. I fear that this situation can lead to a large number of people with disability and chronic health problems in the future.”

The precocious nature of the virus has made infectious-disease experts wary of predicting the next phase of the pandemic. Topol warns that a new batch of variants could come out of the blue, the same way omicron emerged unexpectedly last November with a stunning collection of mutations already packaged together. [Omicron’s precise origin](#) is unknown, but a leading theory is that it evolved in an immunocompromised patient with a persistent infection.

“Inevitably we could see a new Greek letter family like omicron,” Topol said. “There’s still room for this virus to evolve. It has evolved in an accelerated way for months now. So we should count on it.”

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HEADLINE	07/10 Sri Lanka upheaval, need \$6B thru year end
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/10/world/asia/srilanka-economy-fuel.html

GIST	<p>Sri Lanka needs \$6 billion through the end of the year to buy fuel and other essential goods to stabilize its crumbling economy.</p> <p>The question is where that money will come from.</p> <p>One of its most steadfast patrons, India, has already provided \$4 billion in credit and loans, which Sri Lanka has burned through in recent months. In meetings held in Colombo, Indian officials have expressed willingness to keep supporting the country. But its unclear just how much more India will do.</p> <p>The situation has grown so desperate that Sri Lanka has asked President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia for a credit line to buy fuel. Government delegations were even dispatched abroad to meet with anyone who might be able to help, including charities in Qatar.</p> <p>China, a longtime ally of the ruling Rajapaksa family, has largely kept a distance. In past years, China has bankrolled many of their major infrastructure projects with loans.</p> <p>Sri Lanka's monthly fuel bill alone amounts to about \$500 million. Officials have said that many of its traditional fuel suppliers are reluctant to sell to the country, as the state oil company is mired in debt it is struggling to pay off. In recent months, some suppliers have refused to unload fuel tankers docked at Sri Lankan ports until payment was made.</p> <p>Fuel shipments from India occasionally ease the long lines at Sri Lankan gas stations. But when supplies dwindle, the government has rationed fuel and tried to repress demand, by ordering state employees to work from home, for example. The cooking gas shortage became so hopeless for a while that people stopped shopping for it, in some cases leaving their empty cylinders in the street, chaining them together to prevent theft.</p> <p>Officials have appealed to foreign tourists to return to Sri Lanka's pristine beaches and lush mountains, hoping that desperately needed hard currency will trickle in. But the political turmoil, and the logistical nightmare of transportation and electricity cuts, is making that appeal a hard sell.</p> <p>The country is still in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund to restructure billions of dollars in foreign debt, on which it has defaulted. A new arrangement with the I.M.F., which could open doors to outside funding and aid, is months away, and the talks have been further complicated by the latest upheavals in the government.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Airline pilots eye big raises, broad changes
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/10/business/airline-pilots-pay.html
GIST	<p>Staffing shortages, bad weather, high fuel prices and runaway inflation — airlines face plenty of challenges as they seek to benefit from a strong travel rebound. But there's at least one other complication in the mix: negotiating new pilot contracts.</p> <p>Each of the nation's largest carriers is in the process of trying to strike a deal with pilots. In some cases, airlines appear ready to pay substantially higher wages, with two major airlines recently offering to raise pay more than 14 percent in the next year and a half.</p> <p>But money alone may not be enough. Pilot unions are also demanding changes that they say would improve operations and their members' quality of life, particularly as flight disruptions throughout the recovery have left pilots feeling frustrated and overworked.</p> <p>They may be well positioned to get what they want, industry analysts say. A brewing pilot shortage was worsened during the pandemic when airlines encouraged thousands of pilots and other workers to accept buyouts and early-retirement offers. Now, with the industry hiring pilots at record numbers but struggling to attract, train and retain them, their unions are pushing hard for broader changes.</p>

“You absolutely cannot address quality of life with money,” said Casey Murray, a pilot and the president of the Southwest Airlines Pilots Association. “You’re never going to pay someone enough for a lost piano recital with their daughter or a lost baseball game.”

Airlines in the United States have already hired more than 5,500 pilots this year, more than in any full year since at least 1990, according to Future & Active Pilot Advisors, a career consulting firm for pilots. The four largest carriers — American, Delta, Southwest and United — accounted for most of that hiring and collectively employ about 50,000 pilots. Those airlines say they have had little trouble finding qualified candidates, though the smaller, regional airlines from which they hire are struggling.

But even at the largest airlines, training bottlenecks have slowed the process of putting new pilots to work. Those delays have hurt efforts to take full advantage of the travel recovery and, in some cases, have contributed to unexpected meltdowns as bad weather, staff shortages and coronavirus outbreaks conspired to transform what might have been contained turmoil into larger airline disruptions.

To avoid such problems this summer, the industry has broadly reined in its ambitions. Over the course of May, for example, airlines cut about 2.5 percent of the domestic flights scheduled for June through August, according to Cirium, an aviation data provider. And those problems aren’t limited to pilots or to one part of the world: Across Europe, understaffing has [forced airlines to cancel flights](#) and has led aviation [workers to strike](#) over working conditions.

In the United States, airlines have sought to shift some of the blame to the Federal Aviation Administration, arguing that the industry does not have enough air traffic controllers to run smoothly.

In a message to staff members last week, Jon Roitman, United’s chief operations officer, said the aviation system would “remain challenged this summer and beyond” unless the agency addressed its staffing shortage. But the F.A.A. disputed that characterization, arguing in a statement that, while the controller shortage has played a role, “the majority of delays and cancellations are not because of staffing at F.A.A.”

Whatever the cause, disruptions and last-minute schedule changes have frustrated pilots across the industry, leading to complaints of being overworked to the point of fatigue. In a [full-page newspaper advertisement last month](#), the leadership of Delta’s pilot union, known as the Delta Master Executive Council, said that, at current rates, the airline’s pilots will have worked more overtime by this fall than in all of 2018 and 2019 combined.

Higher wages remain a focus of negotiations with Delta, said Jason Ambrosi, the council’s chairman, but pilots are also demanding better working conditions.

“We’re going to work on compensation, but as part of a broader package that includes quality-of-life issues, the schedules, the fact that pilots can show up to work and have their schedule completely jumbled and not have any idea where they’re going to be laying over that night,” said Mr. Ambrosi, who is also a Delta captain. “There’s situations where a pilot may be extended multiple days — he packed his bag for two days and ends up being out for four.”

More than 1,500 Delta pilots and 1,300 Southwest pilots picketed across the country last month to raise awareness of their concerns, according to the unions that represent those pilots. In early June, their peers at American protested outside the New York Stock Exchange for better working conditions. The unions say some of the changes they are seeking predate the pandemic; they are trying to recover benefits, including pensions and protections against overwork, that they say were lost in a wave of bankruptcies in the 2000s.

A little over two years ago, pilots at the four big airlines were in the early stages of contract negotiations. But those efforts were essentially halted by the start of the pandemic. The industry’s focus shifted to survival, and airlines and unions joined forces to successfully lobby Congress for \$54 billion in pandemic aid.

The travel recovery languished until last summer, when the widespread availability of coronavirus vaccines prompted a rebound. Contract talks resumed in earnest this year.

United and its pilots have moved the closest to a new contract, having reached a [two-year agreement](#) that pilots will vote on this week. Under the deal, pilots would receive a series of raises that would increase pay more than 14.5 percent within 18 months. They would also receive better pay for working overtime and during high-demand periods; eight weeks of paid maternity leave; better schedule flexibility; and more protections against overwork.

Last month, American publicized its own offer to pilots, which broadly matched the United deal and would raise base pay nearly 17 percent by the start of 2024. That would increase the top base salary for a captain of a single-aisle plane to \$340,000 a year, while a captain of a larger twin-aisle plane could earn as much as \$425,000 a year, the airline's chief executive said in a message to pilots. The offer will include substantial signing bonuses if pilots agree to it by the end of September.

But the union representing American's 14,000 aviators, the Allied Pilots Association, was unimpressed. In [a video message](#) to the union's members, Ed Sicher, its president, argued that this was "the most competitive market in history for qualified airline pilots," and one that would largely drive favorable pay increases. He encouraged the union's members to remain focused on securing better rules governing scheduling and assignments.

"We all know where the real value in this deal is for our members: It's in the fixes to the onerous work rules to the company practices that have continued to degrade our quality of life," he said.

A slowly building pilot shortage has shifted the dynamics from similar negotiations in years past, experts said. The shortage was caused by a number of factors, including a thinning military-to-airline pipeline and an aging work force. The industry has struggled to bring in recruits, who have been attracted to other fields and discouraged by the approximately \$100,000 in training costs. In hindsight, it appears clear that airlines pushed too many pilots out during the worst of the pandemic, with thousands taking early retirement and buyout offers, according to industry analysts and airline executives.

"For the past 20 years, in general, company leverage has eroded, especially for skilled positions like mechanics and pilots," said Dan Akins, an aviation economist with Flightpath Economics, a consulting firm. "That's been exaggerated by the release of senior people during Covid."

But the shortage has been most acute at regional airlines, which say they are being hamstrung as larger carriers lure pilots away. Making matters worse, many who are leaving are experienced or held jobs training newer pilots, executives at those airlines have said.

That pressure is raising pay for pilots at those smaller airlines. American recently announced huge pay increases for the pilots who work at the regional airlines it owns, a move that is expected to be repeated throughout the industry. However, airline analysts say pilot pay increases at regional and larger carriers are unlikely to have a major effect on fares. While pilot pay is substantial, it accounts for only a small portion of airlines' overall operating costs.

As the negotiations continue, the industry's dynamics may soon take new shape. While demand is booming this summer, sustained high inflation and fears of an economic decline could give rise to weak travel demand in the months ahead, analysts said.

Airlines are "bracing themselves" for a slowdown, said Sheila Kahyaoglu, an aerospace and defense analyst at Jefferies, the investment bank. "Maybe the scheduling concern will sort itself out naturally."

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HEADLINE	07/10 Russia strikes Kharkiv, unveils new flag
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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/10/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#russia-strikes-kharkiv-ukraines-second-biggest-city-amid-signs-it-aims-to-annex-parts-of-the-region
GIST	<p>Russian forces on Sunday conducted attacks on the Kharkiv region of northeast Ukraine, where Russia has unveiled a new flag that could indicate it plans to annex the parts of the industrial province it now occupies.</p> <p>In the city of Kharkiv, volunteers swept up glass shards at a school hit by a rocket in the Slobidsky district early on Sunday. Video taken by a volunteer showed shattered windows, collapsed ceilings and twisted metal on the ground. Pink paper hearts still decorated a blackboard in one of the classrooms, empty for the summer holiday.</p> <p>It was one of two rocket attacks to hit the city early Sunday, the Kharkiv Regional Prosecutor's office said. The target of the attack that struck the school was unclear; a nearby police station remained untouched. School is out of session for the summer.</p> <p>The commander of the largest group of foreign recruits fighting with the Ukrainian army said he believed Russia deliberately attacked the school to try to panic civilians. About half of the population of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second biggest city, has already left.</p> <p>"They are trying to spread panic among the people — that is the way Russia fights," said Mamuka Mamulashvili, commander of the Georgian Legion.</p> <p>Mr. Mamulashvili said reports from Russia's Defense Ministry that it had hit two bases of foreign fighters near Dementiivka, between the city of Kharkiv and the Russian border, on Saturday were untrue. The head of Kharkiv's regional military administration said Ukrainian forces had repelled a Russian assault in the same location.</p> <p>Mr. Mamulashvili said Russia was preparing to launch bigger attacks on Kharkiv. "We have information that they are getting ready for missile attacks and artillery attacks and we are from our side getting ready too," he said.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials estimate that Russia occupies about 30 percent of the Kharkiv region. Four days ago, Russia established a civilian administration in the border areas of Kharkiv province that it now controls, unveiling a flag which the state news agency Tass said "symbolizes historical links of the Kharkiv region with the traditions" of Russia.</p> <p>The Institute for the Study of War said the local occupation government's description of the flag, which has the Russian double-headed eagle and 18th century imagery, as a "symbol of the historical roots of Kharkiv Oblast as an inalienable part of Russian land," was an indication that the Kremlin intends to annex the territory rather than declare it a pro-Russian republic.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Russia intensifies war in Donetsk Province
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/10/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#a-russian-strike-kills-at-least-six-as-the-war-intensifies-in-donetsk-province
GIST	<p>CHASIV YAR, Ukraine — Soldiers and emergency crews worked through the night to rescue people from a bombed apartment complex after a Russian strike in this eastern village a dozen miles from the front line. While at least five survivors had been pulled from the rubble on Sunday morning, emergency services later said that 15 bodies had been found and that up to 24 people could still be trapped beneath the concrete, including a 9-year-old boy.</p> <p>The war is intensifying in Donetsk Province, with a string of towns and villages coming under bombardment in the last week as Russian troops turn their firepower further west after seizing control of the last city under Ukrainian control in neighboring Luhansk Province. The attacks often seem random and</p>

without purpose, but taken as a whole they make clear that Russia's next aim is to capture another slice of Donetsk.

Even as the Russian military command announced an operational pause, its forces have bombarded the five main towns and cities in this region — Bakhmut, Kramatorsk, Sloviansk, Druzhkivka and Kostiantynivka — as well as surrounding villages in varying degrees.

Four rockets slammed into the town of Druzhkivka just after dawn on Saturday, shaking the city, smashing windows and damaging a shopping center and other public buildings, but causing no casualties. The neighboring town of Kostiantynivka came under two cluster-bomb attacks on Saturday afternoon, and in the evening at around 9 p.m. rockets slammed into two buildings in the village of Chasiv Yar, including the apartment complex.

In Druzhkivka, Ukrainian soldiers bunked down in a sports hall may have been the target, but soldiers said it was not hit and they had escaped injury. Police officers inspecting the bomb sites said the rockets were not precision-guided munitions and so pinpointing the target was impossible. Two landed in parks and one in the forecourt of a shopping center.

"It will not break Donbas," said Yevgeny, 45, an I.T. programmer who was retrieving his car covered in dust but undamaged from a rented garage.

But many of the residents of these towns have come from settlements further east, already displaced by the war that has been raging since 2014, and say they recognize the signs of strengthening attacks.

"It's just the beginning," said Lyudmyla, 61, her face pale from shock as she stared at damage to the cultural center in Druzhkivka, near one of the parks that was hit.

In Chasiv Yar, a resident stood watching the rescue work as machines pulled away concrete slabs and emergency workers flung bricks aside with their hands. "My grandmother was here," he said. "That's her bed," he said pointing to the pile of rubble. "I hope they will find her and I can give her a funeral."

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HEADLINE	07/10 Desperate: Russia 'stealth mobilization'
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/10/world/europe/russia-recruits-ukraine-war.html
GIST	<p>Four Russian veterans of the war in Ukraine recently published short videos online to complain about what they called their shabby treatment after returning to the Russian region of Chechnya, after six weeks on the battlefield.</p> <p>One claimed to have been denied a promised payment of nearly \$2,000. Another grumbled that a local hospital declined to remove shrapnel lodged in his body.</p> <p>Their public pleas for help got results, but not the kind they were hoping for. Instead, an aide to Ramzan Kadyrov, the autocrat who runs Chechnya, berated them at length on television as ingrates and forced them to recant. "I was paid much more than they promised," said Nikolai Lipa, the young Russian who had claimed that he had been cheated.</p> <p>Ordinarily, these sort of complaints might be ignored, but the swift rebuke underscores how Russian officials want to stamp out any criticism about military service in Ukraine. They need more soldiers, desperately, and are already using what some analysts call a "stealth mobilization" to bring in new recruits without resorting to a politically risky national draft.</p> <p>To make up the manpower shortfall, the Kremlin is relying on a combination of impoverished ethnic minorities, Ukrainians from the separatist territories, mercenaries and militarized National Guard units to fight the war, and promising hefty cash incentives for volunteers.</p>

“Russia has a problem with recruitment and mobilization,” said Kamil Galeev, an independent Russian analyst and former fellow at The Wilson Center in Washington. “It is basically desperate to get more men using any means possible.”

The numbers of battlefield dead and wounded are closely held secrets on both sides. The British military recently estimated the number of dead Russians at 25,000, with tens of thousands more wounded, out of an invasion force of 300,000, including support units.

Yet, President Vladimir V. Putin hobbled the mobilization effort from the beginning, experts said, by refusing to put Russia on a war footing that would have allowed the military to start calling up reserves. Hence, the Kremlin has tried to glue together replacement battalions through other means.

Avoiding a draft for all adult males allows the Kremlin to maintain the fiction that the war is a limited “special military operation,” while also minimizing the risk of the kind of public backlash that spurred the end of previous Russian military debacles, like the one in Afghanistan and the first Chechen war.

The public outcry after Chechnya prompted Russia to ban the use on the battlefield of raw recruits, men aged 18-27 who are required to complete a year of mandatory military service. The revelations that hundreds were deployed in Ukraine anyway, including some of the sailors who died when the Ukrainians sank the Moskva, the flagship of the Black Sea fleet, prompted the very outrage from parents that the Kremlin had sought to avoid.

Numerous analysts have raised doubts about how long Russia can sustain its offensive in Ukraine without a general mobilization. Igor Girkin, a military analyst and a frequent critic of the Ukraine strategy, has said that Russia cannot possibly conquer the entire country without one.

But the Kremlin seems determined to avoid taking such a drastic step. Instead, recruitment offices have resorted to calling reservists repeatedly to offer cash incentives for short deployments. Online want ads placed by the regional recruitment offices of the Ministry of Defense also overflow with thousands of postings for those with military specialties. Recent listings on global job sites like Head Hunter included units looking for combat engineers, anyone who could operate a grenade launcher and even the commander for a parachute squadron.

The salaries offered to some volunteers, which can range between \$2,000 and \$6,000 a month, are far more than the average monthly salary in Russia of about \$700. Prewar contracts for privates sometimes were as paltry as around \$200 a month.

Enthusiasm for the war inspires some volunteers, experts noted, while workers in industrial regions hit by factory closings because of sanctions might also find the money attractive.

“Mostly, of course, it is a way of earning money,” said Sergei Krivenko, director of the Russian human rights organization Citizen Army Law. Many, especially older volunteers, have substantial debts, he and others said. A May law scrapped the age limit of 40 for contract soldiers.

Such piecemeal efforts sustain the war, but do not address the fundamental manpower deficit, analysts said. While Ukraine faces similar problems, what it lacks in professional soldiers it compensates for in enthusiastic volunteers, they said.

The online Russian ads avoid mentioning Ukraine, and the short-term offers, often three months, are meant to play down the risks of never coming home. “It may be that it is necessary to get them into the army, and when they are already in the army, figure out what to do,” said Mr. Galeev.

The high death toll among soldiers from poorer republics populated by ethnic minorities, like Dagestan in the Caucasus and Buryatia in southern Siberia, indicate that they fill the front ranks in disproportionate numbers. Statistics, compiled by MediaZona, an independent news outlet, from public sources, show 225

dead in Dagestan through June, along with 185 in Buryatia, compared to nine from Moscow and 30 from St. Petersburg.

Minority conscripts in particular are pressured to sign contracts. “They tell them that if they return to their hometown, they will not find any job, so it is better to stay in the army to earn money,” said Vladimir Budaev, a spokesman for the Free Buryatia Foundation, an antiwar group abroad for the Buryats, an Indigenous minority.

Units from Rosgvardia, the militarized National Guard, have been deployed to Ukraine, and it apparently has sufficient numbers for rotations. But there do not seem to be enough regular soldiers for rotations. A group of about 15 women from Buryatia recently posted a video online complaining that their male relatives and friends had been deployed without leave since January.

In 2013, Mr. Kadyrov, Chechnya’s strongman ruler, established a private training institute now called the Russian University of Special Forces. Given his role in helping to defeat Chechen separatists, Mr. Kadyrov has long been granted wider latitude than any other regional leader to field his own armed men. Since the war, he has used his training center as a vehicle to recruit not just Chechens, but men throughout Russia.

Reports have also emerged from Chechnya that war critics or men arrested for petty crimes are often beaten, then forced to either sign a contract to fight in Ukraine or pay a bribe.

Mr. Kadyrov has pledged to pay almost \$6,000 to volunteers who sign a three-month contract, supplementing the \$53 a day promised by the Russian Ministry of Defense.

Mr. Kadyrov’s aide, Mogamed Daudov, while berating the four men who produced the video complaining about their treatment, claimed that they were the only four who expressed dissatisfaction out of what he said were more than 3,200 volunteers deployed to Ukraine from Chechnya.

Other volunteers featured on Chechen television have praised exercises in shooting, urban warfare and other techniques. By all accounts, however, the training lasts about a week, which analysts consider woefully inadequate.

One longstanding taboo is being tossed aside in the quest for soldiers.

The authorities in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia have announced that they will form regiments made up entirely of men from the region, apparently in hopes that local nationalism would inspire more volunteers. The military has avoided that kind of recruitment since czarist times out of fear of fostering separatist movements.

In the battle for Luhansk and Donetsk in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, the Russian military has done away with niceties like cash bonuses. Conscription is mandatory for men aged between 18 and 65 in areas under Russian control, and frontline fighters there are mainly local conscripts.

Since they are Ukrainian citizens, the thousands of dead and wounded have minimal impact in Russia, so the Kremlin is particularly cavalier about their casualties, experts say.

Some have been grabbed right off the streets and dispatched to the trenches with little or no training and vintage guns, military analysts and relatives have said. “It is the colonial model of locals being used as cannon fodder,” Mr. Galeev said.

The ombudsman for the Donetsk People’s Republic, a pseudo-statelet created by Russia, wrote on his Telegram channel in early June that 2,061 of its men had been killed and 8,509 wounded from a force of 20,000 at the start of the invasion, a staggering percentage.

	<p>The riskiest technical operations on the battlefield are often assigned to experienced mercenaries under contract to Wagner or similar private commercial operations, analysts said. Wagner gained prominence as the organization deployed to help implement Russian foreign policy goals in Syria and various African nations.</p> <p>It too has reportedly been casting about for willing recruits. In St. Petersburg, Wagner convinced several dozen prisoners to sign six-month contracts to fight in exchange for about \$4,000 and amnesty if they come back alive, according to the independent news outlet Important Stories.</p> <p>The armies of many countries faced with similar gaps in manpower and other problems might have collapsed, said Johan Norberg, one of the authors of a recent report on the war called “A Rude Awakening,” by the Swedish Defense Research Agency.</p> <p>“All these groups are unlikely to contribute to a decisive Russian win,” he said, referring to those recruited. “But they can help maintain Russia’s current positions and possibly allow for some minor tactical advances, for example, in Donbas.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/09 Tacoma PD push for women: '30 by 30'
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/tacoma-police-looking-increase-force-30-women-by-2030/MSGEAOJWMVGPFE4KRQZJ7TDL7M/
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — There’s a push to get more women on the Tacoma police force.</p> <p>Tacoma Police Department has signed onto a national initiative to get more women on the force, called “30 by 30.” That’s 30% of its sworn officers being women by 2030.</p> <p>It likely comes as no surprise that just 48 of Tacoma’s sworn police officers are women. And even in racially-diverse Tacoma, the overwhelming majority are like Kate Tegler — they are white.</p> <p>The woman working to change that is recruiting Officer Taylor Reeves, a 12-year-police veteran in her sixth year with Tacoma police.</p> <p>Even though her grandfather was a police officer, Reeves didn’t consider police work until she took a criminal justice course in college.</p> <p>“At the time, I didn’t know what I wanted to do,” said Reeves. “But I took the class and it was taught by a police officer. And then he welcomed people to come on a ride-along if they’re interested. I did. And when I did the ride-along, I was hooked. I loved it.”</p> <p>What did she love? “Oh, just the adrenaline of it,” she said. “But, like you said, you could be doing nothing for a little bit, and all of a sudden you’re making a traffic stop. And it was a fun experience.”</p> <p>But she is a definite minority here. Tacoma has 321 sworn police officers — 48 of them are women, comprising just 14%. And only eight Tacoma police officers are women of color.</p> <p>Reeves was asked if she has been called names because she is a police officer.</p> <p>“Oh yeah, of course,” she said. “Yeah, that’s been part of it.”</p> <p>Reeves acknowledges she has faced criticism that her white counterparts likely never have. It was especially painful, she said, when she was a younger officer.</p> <p>“I would definitely say I got more pushback from people of color than I did normal everyday citizens, not of color,” she said. “Oh, kinda saying like ‘you’re a traitor’ just for wearing uniform, stuff like that.</p>

	<p>I usually say ‘I’m serving my community.’ I say ‘I’m trying to make myself better. I’m trying to make my family better. This is why I picked this career.’ ”</p> <p>The only stated numerical goal for Tacoma Police Department’s recruiting effort is 30% females on the force by the year 2030. But Reeves says there is a larger goal to change the TPD’s culture. So, its recruitment efforts are not limited to women.</p> <p>“No, we’re not,” said Reeves. “Just people from all different backgrounds, different ethnicities. Tacoma is very diverse altogether. And just whenever we show up to calls, we want people to feel comfortable speaking with officers, maybe speaking to an officer of color or different gender may help them feel more comfortable.”</p> <p>And perhaps help them see that this is a job for any woman and anyone else who wants to serve this community.</p> <p>Tacoma Police Department has plenty of openings. It wants to recruit 44 sworn officers.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/09 First-ever ‘SeaTac Scrub Down’
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/volunteers-pick-up-trash-part-first-ever-seatac-scrub-down/7OQFYEQHUBCCDIZQXZU4W4VABE/
GIST	<p>The city of SeaTac says trash has been a growing problem since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>That’s why on Saturday, the city held its first-ever “SeaTac Scrub Down.”</p> <p>The event was held at Angle Lake Park, where some volunteers even picked up trash from the lake.</p> <p>According to organizers, that wasn’t necessarily part of the plan, but it speaks to how many different people from different communities showed up to Angle Lake Park on Saturday.</p> <p>That’s one of the core reasons the event was held, organizers said. The SeaTac Scrub Down had a simple goal — to gather people from across the city to pick up trash, and to build community by getting to better know their neighbors.</p> <p>Volunteers gathered at Angle Lake Park, divided into five groups and went to different areas across the city.</p> <p>“We have a lot of different cultures that are here, and so having events like this where we’re all co-taking care of our space with our different cultures coming together, that’s what it’s about to me,” said Mason Giem, City of SeaTac public works program coordinator.</p> <p>Organizers said this is just one part of a larger effort by city staff and council to pick up trash.</p> <p>The city of SeaTac says they’ve collected 1,700 bags of litter within the last year.</p> <p>The average weight of a bag of trash is about 20 pounds, so that’s about 34,000 pounds of trash picked up off the streets, sidewalks, parks and highway ramps.</p> <p>There was also free food, shirts and live music at Saturday’s event. Organizers said with the strong showing this year, it’s almost a guarantee that they’ll hold a second SeaTac Scrub Down in the near future.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/08 Across southern Arizona, border woes
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SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/interactive/2022/border-arizona-immigration-biden/
GIST	<p>YUMA, Ariz. — The young men wearing parkas and sweatshirts appeared out of the darkness around 2 a.m., running for a gap in the border wall and sending up great clouds of dust.</p> <p>“Don’t run!” the other migrants shouted in Spanish. “Walk!” the Border Patrol agents yelled.</p> <p>The 15 men, all from India, clustered together anxiously in line along with hundreds of others waiting to turn themselves in. The crowd included families from Colombia and Venezuela. Smiling Cuban 20-somethings taking selfies. Several young Iranians, the only ones wearing protective masks for COVID. A group of Georgians heading for New Jersey.</p> <p>The polyglot queue in Yuma of what authorities call “give ups” presented a jarring contrast to the wild chases happening about 300 miles farther east along the border. Under a blazing afternoon sun in Nogales a day earlier, young men from Mexico wearing head-to-toe camouflage climbed over the border wall every few minutes in choreographed intervals, racing into dry creek beds, residential backyards and a sprawling junkyard. A dozen or so U.S. agents charged after them on ATVs, bicycles and horseback, badly outnumbered.</p> <p>Arizona spans more than 370 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border, and perhaps no other state better encapsulates the array of challenges facing U.S. officials trying to manage the illegal entries. Border crossers are arriving from more countries and in greater numbers than ever, at the same time that Mexican migration has surged to levels not matched since the mid-2000s.</p> <p>U.S. Customs and Border Protection is on pace to make more than 2 million arrests along the Mexico border during the 2022 fiscal year that ends in September, surpassing last year’s record of 1.73 million. About 400,000 have occurred in Arizona.</p> <p>“The people who are crossing the border don’t pick where they cross the border,” John Modlin, the Border Patrol chief of the Tucson sector, said in an interview. “They are at the mercy of the smuggling organizations.”</p> <p>CBP divides Arizona into two sectors, Yuma and Tucson. The Mexican traffickers who control smuggling routes have developed a tailored strategy for each one to move clients paying thousands of dollars to enter the United States.</p> <p>The Tucson sector is used mostly for young men from Mexico. Smugglers guide them via cellphone through isolated desert and mountain areas, or send them to blitz the border wall in ones and twos, stretching U.S. agents whose numbers are spread too thin to stop them all. As daytime temperatures soar past 100 degrees, emergency rescue calls are constant and deaths from heat exposure are common. The smugglers play a numbers game, knowing agents are too tied up to arrest everyone and migrants rarely face legal consequences for getting caught.</p> <p>Adults from Mexico and Central America’s Northern Triangle countries arrested in the Tucson sector are typically sent back across the border under an emergency public health policy implemented at the start of the coronavirus pandemic. The policy, known as Title 42, gives U.S. agents a quick way to return migrants, but CBP officials acknowledge a spike in recidivism rates because there is no punishment or threat of jail for repeat crossing attempts.</p> <p>In Nogales, one young man from Mexico’s Puebla state said it was the third time he’d been caught by agents in 15 days. His mother and father were waiting for him in New York City, he said. “I’ll keep trying,” he shrugged.</p> <p>A cheap cellphone found in the bushes near the spot where he was arrested had text messages from an apparent smuggler. “POLLO,” one message read, using the smugglers’ term for customers. “ANSWER,” it said in Spanish.</p>

The Yuma sector's pattern is the near-opposite. Migrants from all over the world, including many families with children, arrive in groups of 60 to 100 between midnight and dawn. Vans, trucks and passenger vehicles drop them off along the banks of the Colorado River on the Mexican side, and they wade through knee-high water into the United States, entering through unfinished segments of the border wall.

The challenge for U.S. agents in this sector amounts to more an administrative than physical one: in the middle of the night handling huge volumes of newcomers, including children, speaking dozens of languages.

The process at the busiest crossing point in Yuma has become so routinized that it resembles an outdoor international arrival hall. There are portable restrooms, crates of bottled water and trash bins where migrants are instructed to toss any personal items that don't fit into a small plastic bag.

Cubans have been arriving in numbers not recorded since the 1980 Mariel boatlift, and many of those lined up in Yuma announced and narrated their U.S. landing on social media. Others video-chatted with loved ones on WhatsApp. Arizona served as a roundabout way for them to get to Florida, but a much safer one than the sea.

Summer temperatures in Yuma reach 110 degrees during the day and remained close to 90 well past midnight. The group of men from India who ran to the wall remained in tight formation, sweating profusely in puffy coats and cold-weather gear. "Punjab," several said when asked where they were from, shaking their heads at questions about how they'd arrived and why they'd left India.

A Colombian man, Ronald Lopez, arrived panting and dizzy, aided by his wife, Diana, and son, Samuel, 9, who was wearing a New York Yankees cap. The family got lost in the brush along the river, Lopez said, and his diabetes triggered a low-blood-sugar episode. He collapsed against the border wall.

A young Brazilian ahead of him in line who said he had medical training appeared with a jar of Nutella. Lopez scooped out the sticky hazelnut spread with his fingers and gulped it down with bottled water set out by the Border Patrol.

"Papi, it's all right, you'll be OK," Samuel said, hugging his father as both cried. "We made it. We're in the United States. This is your dream."

Lopez said he worked at a car dealership in Bogotá, but his wife had felt unsafe back home. A friend in New York with a cookware business needed a new salesman. So the family flew to Cancún.

A Mexican immigration agent threatened to deport them, Lopez said, but let them through for \$600. They caught another flight to Tijuana, where he said police along the highway took the rest of the family's cash, more than \$1,000.

"We're making this sacrifice for a better life," Lopez said. "Things in Colombia are very hard."

Of the 33,326 migrants taken into CBP custody in Yuma in May, about 3.5% were expelled under the Title 42 policy, the lowest figure anywhere along the border. Mexico generally does not accept the return of non-Mexicans from outside Central America, and migrants who claim a fear of harm if deported are generally bused out of the Yuma area and released into the United States pending a court hearing.

Agents in Yuma have encountered migrants from 109 countries so far this year, according to CBP figures.

Some, but not all, submit formal applications for asylum in the United States. U.S. immigration courts rarely grant asylum, but the adjudication process typically takes several years. During that time

applicants are allowed to live and work in the United States, and the odds they will face arrest and deportation if denied are low, government statistics show.

After CBP processing in Yuma, some migrants are transported to the Casa Alitas Welcome Center in Tucson, operated by Catholic Community Services in a former juvenile detention center brightened by cheerful décor.

Sanjay Salim Chodry arrived at an intake area with his wife and two young children after a 10,000-mile journey from Gujarat, India. The family flew to Turkey, then Cuba and El Salvador before traversing Mexico and arriving in Yuma, Chodry said.

Shelter staff handed his family plates of pasta and vegetables. “No meat, right?” he asked, making sure the food was vegetarian.

“Everything in India is too expensive,” he said. “America is the number-one superpower.”

The shelter offered COVID screenings, meals, Wi-Fi access and travel coordination so migrants could purchase plane and bus tickets to their U.S. destinations. Director Teresa Cavendish said the number of migrants arriving from the border had dipped in June as summer temperatures rose.

“There’s a lull right now, but it won’t last,” she said. “I think there are still a lot of people waiting to see how the administration will respond if Title 42 is not lifted.”

The Biden administration attempted to lift Title 42 in May, but a federal court blocked the move, ordering the administration to keep the policy in place.

In the Tucson sector, about 74% of the 25,923 CBP arrests in May ended with an expulsion under Title 42, one of the highest rates along the border.

Tucson also has some of the largest numbers of “gotaway” incidents in which a border crosser is detected entering illegally but not taken into custody, according to CBP. The agency is recording about 1,000 such cases per day border-wide, according to a senior official who was not authorized to share the unpublished figures.

The push-and-pull factors that fuel migration have become powerfully aligned since President Joe Biden took office. The pandemic, a sputtering global economy and myriad conflicts around the world are driving people to leave their homes in search of better lives; U.S. labor demand, an overburdened American asylum system and the Biden administration’s reputation for permissiveness serve as draws.

Republicans have been pounding the president’s border record ahead of the November midterm elections, and the deaths discovered in San Antonio in late June of 53 migrants being transported in a truck lacking adequate air or water — the deadliest human smuggling case in U.S. history — brought new waves of partisan blame.

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, a Republican, signed a \$564 million spending bill this week to add more barriers and detection technology along the border, while also boosting assistance to local law enforcement agencies. In May, Ducey began sending busloads of migrants from Arizona to Washington, D.C. — if they volunteer for a ride — following a similar initiative started by Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott.

Polls show immigration and border management are among Biden’s worst-rated issues, and video footage of the crossings in Yuma are featured in Republican ads.

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and other Biden officials say they plan to ramp up criminal prosecutions for illegal reentry, the enforcement tool used by CBP in the past primarily to deter Mexican migrants.

The court ruling extending Title 42 does not preclude the Biden administration from referring repeat offenders to U.S. attorneys. Officials did not provide information about the number of such cases the agency has referred for prosecution in recent months.

In interviews, CBP officials praised Mexican authorities for boosting enforcement along the south side of the border. But scouts working for smuggling organizations were visible on the hillsides above Nogales on a recent afternoon, brazenly directing the timing and location of crossing attempts.

Frustrated Border Patrol agents in Yuma said they were watched by smugglers on the Mexican side, too. Every time agents finished processing one large group and loaded them onto vans, a new group would arrive, as if the smugglers were staggering flights like air traffic controllers.

A young family from Russia arrived with a 4-year-old daughter they said was a U.S. citizen, born in Miami. There were four men from an extended family in Venezuela who shared photos of their grueling five-day jungle trek through Panama's Darien Gap.

"I leave a hard life behind," said Philipe Adeichvilli, who said he worked as a police officer in his hometown of Kutaisi, Georgia. "I think in USA my life will not be in danger." He was headed for New Jersey.

Chris Clem, the Border Patrol chief in Yuma, said despite the record volume of migrants arriving to the sector, U.S. agents have kept the process moving quickly. CBP cellphones are loaded with new facial recognition software that scans identification documents and uploads the information to intake files on agency servers, not unlike the formal process at official ports of entry.

On the opposite side of the border wall in Yuma, a young man who said his name was Alfredo lingered just out of view from the agents, scavenging. He said he crosses the border every night to pick through discarded backpacks, shoes and clothing, searching for items of value.

"I find money all the time," he said. "Mexican pesos. They don't want them anymore."

Alfredo said he lost his job as a dental assistant in the Mexican border town of Los Algodones during the pandemic, when people stopped crossing over for crowns and fillings. U.S. agents don't bother him as long as he stays on the other side of the wall, he said.

"There's no work in my town anymore," he said. "Only smugglers."

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HEADLINE	07/09 Probable monkeypox case in Pierce Co.
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article263324193.html
GIST	<p>The first probable case of monkeypox has been found in Pierce County, the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department announced Saturday afternoon.</p> <p>The infected person, a man in his 30s, tested positive for the Orthopoxvirus on Saturday, the TPCHD said. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will confirm the diagnosis.</p> <p>The man was never hospitalized and is recovering at home, the TPCHD said.</p> <p>"We are working with him and his healthcare providers to identify anyone who may have come into close contact with him while he was infectious," the agency said in a statement.</p> <p>"He is isolating and does not pose a risk to others."</p> <p>WHAT IS MONKEYPOX?</p>

Monkeypox is a rare viral disease that has recently broken out in the U.S. The virus spreads during close, physical contact with infected people.

The virus causes an outbreak of rashes and skin sores.

At first, cases in the state were tied to travel.

Now, the virus appears to be spreading locally, Public Health Seattle-King County announced this week. The Pierce County case does not appear connected to travel, the TPCHD said.

A person can be infectious until their sores heal. That can take several weeks, the TPCHD said.

SYMPTOMS

Monkeypox can cause a rash that looks like bumps, blisters or ulcers. Before the rash, some people have flu-like symptoms including fever, headache, muscle aches, chills, swollen lymph nodes and exhaustion.

The monkeypox virus is similar to smallpox. Antiviral drugs and vaccines developed to protect against smallpox can be used to treat and prevent monkeypox.

The state department of Health and Human Services had developed a new vaccine strategy to slow the spread of the virus in at-risk communities.

“We are working with Washington State Department of Health to coordinate those efforts in Pierce County,” TPCHD said.

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HEADLINE	07/08 CDC: most should be wearing masks
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-07-08/cdc-majority-of-americans-should-be-wearing-masks-indoors-or-considering-it
GIST	<p>Most Americans should be wearing masks indoors in public spaces or considering the measure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>According to updated CDC data, 32% of the population should be wearing masks while indoors and nearly 42% should be considering the measure based on their risk for severe COVID-19.</p> <p>It represents a slight overall increase from last week’s numbers. New coronavirus cases in the U.S. have held steady at about 100,000 on average each day for roughly a month and a half. Hospitalizations are increasing while average deaths are below 300 per day.</p> <p>The vast majority of the country is experiencing high COVID-19 transmission levels, according to CDC data. Most states are seeing increasing infections, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. Despite these trends, fewer Americans consider COVID-19 to be a major threat to public health, according to a new poll.</p> <p>From January to May, the percentage of Americans who consider COVID-19 to be a major threat dropped from 57% to 41%, according to the survey from Pew Research Center. Both the percentages of people who consider it to be a minor threat or not a threat at all to public health increased over the same period.</p> <p>Meanwhile, a new pair of omicron subvariants are tightening their grip on the U.S. BA.4 and BA.5 were responsible for 70% of new coronavirus cases last week. That’s up from 55% of cases the week before, when the pair became the dominant strains circulating in the U.S.</p> <p>The highly transmissible pair could spur a slight increase in coronavirus cases or, at the very least, a longer plateau for the latest coronavirus wave, according to experts.</p>

HEADLINE	07/08 How many w/long Covid?
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-07-08/how-many-people-have-long-covid-the-statistics-are-pretty-scary
GIST	<p>The majority of Americans have had the coronavirus at some point in the past two and a half years. A smaller number – though still a substantial proportion – went on to have lingering symptoms for months or longer from a condition known as long COVID-19.</p> <p>Just how many people have had long COVID or are still experiencing it? Estimates vary, but the numbers might be a surprise to many. And the high estimates could signal lingering problems for America’s health care systems as well as the economy even after the pandemic is over.</p> <p>According to federal government estimates released last month, nearly 1 in 5 adults who have had COVID-19 in the past were still experiencing at least one symptom of long COVID – fatigue, shortness of breath, brain fog, chest pain and headaches among others – as of mid-June. The number jumps to more than 1 in 3 when considering adults who have experienced the condition at any point in the pandemic after COVID-19 infection.</p> <p>The statistics are “pretty scary,” according to Mikhail Kogan, the director of the George Washington University Center for Integrative Medicine.</p> <p>“If we don’t stop this, if it’s continuous the way it is, we will have potentially a magnitude of most of the population at some point developing some long COVID symptoms,” Kogan says.</p> <p>But experts say the resources to handle the tens of millions of Americans with long COVID are insufficient. Ashley Drapeau, the director of the center’s long COVID program, says some clinics dedicated to treating the condition have a waiting period of months or even years before patients can be seen.</p> <p>“These patients are sitting at home unable to work, unable to take care of their families,” says Drapeau, who had long COVID after contracting COVID-19 in December 2020. “Debilitated young people having to quit school – and they’re faced with very limited options.”</p> <p>That number could amass into a new wave of chronic illness that will continue to grow with guaranteed implications for the economy as well as health care systems. A Government Accountability Office report published in March found that long COVID has “potentially affected up to 23 million Americans, pushing an estimated 1 million people out of work,” and that number is likely higher now.</p> <p>“Some of those patients are recovering so slow that you’re simply going to have a massive growth, gradual expansion of the total pool of these patients because they’re not recovering fast enough compared to the new people added to the pool,” Kogan says. “So we’re going to see a continuous, increased demand on our health care systems.”</p> <p>In fact, one study published in May found that roughly half of people hospitalized with the coronavirus in Wuhan, China, at the start of the pandemic reported symptoms of long COVID two years later. Authors said it was the longest follow-up study to date.</p> <p>While the study did find that the physical and mental health of the patients improved over time, it still suggested that coronavirus patients have poorer health and quality of life than the general population two years after hospitalization.</p> <p>Kogan says that despite increasing long COVID numbers, there isn’t a strong, centralized push for more funding or resources. Instead, it’s more of a “wait and see” approach. He acknowledges that many people</p>

eventually recover from the condition even without treatment but stresses that people could recover sooner with help.

“We’re seeing people coming to us a year or two years after they got sick, and they still can barely walk,” he says.

While long COVID can arise after mild or even asymptomatic cases of COVID-19, the risk for the condition is likely higher for those who had more severe disease. Given that the cause of long COVID remains unknown and the symptoms list varies widely, treatment hasn’t been the most straightforward process for many.

“I think that a lot of patients are quickly realizing that the standard of care for COVID is just not very good,” Kogan says. “There are no effective tools in standard medicine. The therapies are very effective, but they’re often not enough. And so this is why we decided on the integrative approach with a lot more alternative things like acupuncture, qigong, different diets, different vitamins or supplements – turned out actually that’s where suddenly people were starting to get a lot better.”

There is also no single test for long COVID, so many patients go through multiple doctors and evaluations to assess their condition and make sure their symptoms can’t be attributed to anything else.

Similar to long COVID clinics for adults, programs for kids are also booked up.

The pediatric post-COVID program at Children’s National Hospital in Washington, D.C., has seen about 80 new patients since it started in May 2021, while 300 more have been referred to the program or sent in inquiries. Appointments at the clinic are fully booked through October, according to Alexandra Yonts, the program’s director.

She says symptoms in kids can range from mild like loss of taste or smell to severe with every organ affected.

The vast majority of the patients were healthy prior to contracting COVID-19. Yonts says that many were “super high functioning, straight ‘A’ students, Division I athletes involved in 800 things under the sun and excelling in all of them.”

“I’d say 90% of cases were completely healthy before they got COVID-19 and now have some degree of disability that has rapidly and massively impacted their life, which is hard for anyone to accept but especially for kids who are going through this crazy developmental stage of their life anyway,” Yonts says.

Still, most of the kids they have treated have experienced improvement over time.

“I think that that has been encouraging for most parents to hear,” she says.

Nearly 13.8 million children have tested positive for COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. While there is less research on long COVID in kids, one recent review of more than 20 studies found the prevalence to be about 25% – or 1 in 4 – among children and adolescents who have had COVID-19.

And cases of long COVID in kids are certainly being missed, especially among younger children who may not be able to express some of their symptoms.

Some of those missed cases are also likely in part due to a lack of a clear definition of long COVID in children. Yonts says her program uses the World Health Organization’s definition for long COVID, which technically is meant for adults.

WHO defines long COVID as “the illness that occurs in people who have a history of probable or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection; usually within three months from the onset of COVID-19, with symptoms and effects that last for at least two months.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, on the other hand, describes long COVID as a “wide range of new, returning or ongoing health problems people can experience four or more weeks after first being infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.”

“We don't want it to be too exclusive of a definition, but I think it needs to be narrowed a little bit because what we're getting is something that's too broad,” Yonts says.

From the clinical perspective, Yonts says, what matters most is if someone has symptoms that are interfering with their daily life.

“There’s a lot of thought across the board that the earlier you can be evaluated for this and get plugged into some sort of knowledgeable rehabilitative program, the better and faster your recovery will be,” Yonts says.

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HEADLINE	07/09 Fear follows witnesses of mass shootings
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/07/09/americans-constant-fears-mass-shootings-persists/7686142001/
GIST	<p>Anxiety and post-traumatic stress have followed Tia Christiansen, 53, years after the shooting at a Las Vegas music festival left dozens dead.</p> <p>Christiansen was in a hotel room at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in 2017 when a gunman killed 58 people and left hundreds injured. She recalled the loudness and intensity of the gunfire of 1,000 bullets that she heard from just two rooms down from the gunman, who fired from the window into the crowd.</p> <p>"Some days, it's so top of mind and it's so overwhelming that it's difficult to get out of bed, and some days it's not possible for me to get anything done at all," Christiansen said, who was uninjured in the shooting. "Not even something as simple as the dishes. It's just too much."</p> <p>Every time there's a mass shooting across the nation, it intensifies Christiansen's fear of being caught in another one.</p> <p>"It brings it all back in a very palpable way," Christiansen said. "My body hurts. A lot of my PTSD symptoms come back 100-fold. It makes it feel like all the progress that has been made can disappear in a moment or a day."</p> <p>Research shows that the mental health toll of mass shootings extends far beyond survivors and witnesses. Mass shootings were reported as the most common source of stress among U.S. adults, according to an August 2019 survey conducted by the American Psychological Association.</p> <p>The 71% stress rate was higher than stress from health care that year at 69%. And nearly one third of the U.S. population feared they could not go out in public without the chance of a mass shooting, according to the survey.</p> <p>"We did the 2019 survey on the heels of the shootings in El Paso and Dayton, which, unfortunately, are just way too eerily similar to what we've seen in the last couple months," Valie Wright, senior director of health care innovation at the American Psychology Association, told USA TODAY.</p> <p>So far in 2022, there have been 322 mass shootings where at least four people were shot or killed as of July 8, according to the Gun Violence Archive.</p>

Patricia Maisch, 73, said her perception of safety in public changed forever after she witnessed the 2011 shooting at a grocery store in Tucson, Arizona, where former Democratic Rep. Gabby Giffords and 12 others were injured. Six people died.

Even 11 years after her experience, Maisch said she remains alert and cautious in public, and she finds herself searching for escape plans and places to hide in case a shooting breaks out.

“Would I hide under a chair, under the seats, behind the desk, if that was how close I was?” Maisch said, describing her thought process if she were at an airport, for example. “Would I run into a bathroom?”

At least 24% of adults surveyed in 2019 said they changed how they regularly lived due to the fear, the American Psychological Association reported.

Since the Las Vegas shooting five years ago, Christiansen said she hasn't been to a concert, movie theater or any large crowds due to her PTSD. Her level of anxiety in large crowds becomes overwhelming to the point where she shakes and cannot speak, she said.

“I do everything I can to avoid putting myself in a position where it feels anything like being back and in a large gathering, which breaks my heart because it really eliminates a lot of opportunity to live a total life of freedom,” Christiansen said.

Shaundelle Brooks, 52, also worries about her safety in public ever since her son was killed four years ago [in a shooting at a Waffle House in Antioch, Tennessee](#). Her son, Akilah DaSilva, was 23 when he was shot and killed, along with three others.

“Every crowd, everywhere we go, we're constantly looking,” Brooks said, who lives in Nashville. “We're constantly thinking that this could happen again.”

She said she worries about her three other children.

“Every time my children walk out the door, every time we leave to go somewhere, I'm constantly in fear of this happening again,” she said.

Brooks founded the [Akilah DaSilva Foundation](#) in January 2019 to honor her son and advocate for changes. She also is a Moms Demand Action volunteer with Everytown for Gun Safety, and she said she uses her traumatic experience to advocate against gun violence.

But the constant news of mass shootings affects her grieving process and ability to cope with what happened.

“You get up and you think you're gonna have a normal day, and then here comes another mass shooting,” Brooks said. “So, it's no real way of coping with it.”

How to cope

According to [Everytown for Gun Safety](#), 9 of 10 gun violence survivors deal with trauma from the incident, according to the February 2022 report. About two-thirds of survivors who were shot sought mental health services, therapy, and support following the shooting, the report found.

“Trauma does some crazy things to the brain,” said Tennille Pereira, director of the Vegas Strong Resiliency Center, who works with victims of mass shootings. “It puts the brain in this heightened state of fear, and so even though the immediate threat is gone, their brain can often stay in that heightened sense of fear.”

Pereira, who provided legal services for Las Vegas victims and their families, said the fears are a natural response to the trauma endured throughout one's experience.

When it comes to coping and alleviating fears, there are different methods but they should center around resilience and maintaining a health emotional well being, said Wright of the American Psychology Association.

"Coping behaviors really differ for people," Wright said. "So, it could be things like meditation, or going for a walk, being out in nature. All those sorts of things to kind of just shore up your emotional well being are going to be important."

Wright said it will take more than one person to help battle these fears. Workplaces, schools and universities need to be helping address this public health crisis, he said.

"We can't just expect people to self-care their way out of this. We need our systems to support our emotional well being too," he said.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden signed a [bipartisan gun bill](#) on June 25 that would require gun buyers under 21 to undergo an investigative period to examine juvenile and mental health records. It's one of the most historic gun control deals in three decades.

Brooks said she would feel safer if the lawmakers passed stricter gun control laws that could prevent mass shootings. Her son's murderer was [not legally allowed](#) to possess any firearms.

"I think that that would alleviate some of the fear in survivors and people that have experienced gun violence," Brooks said.

Until action takes place, the best way to cope is to support communities with gun violence victims, Wright said.

"It's our responsibility to act in ways to ... support survivors and show them that this isn't OK," Wright said.

"This isn't an individual problem," he added. "This is a larger problem."

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HEADLINE	07/08 Jobs market remains robust
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/june-jobs-report-unemployment-rate-economy-growth-2022-11657237512?mod=hp_lead_pos1&mod=hp_lead_pos6
GIST	<p>Employers continued to snap up workers in June—though at a slower pace than earlier in the year—in an economy that is otherwise cooling rapidly under the weight of high inflation and rising interest rates.</p> <p>The U.S. economy added 372,000 jobs in June, the Labor Department said Friday. Hiring gains last month held near the previous three months, when companies added an average of nearly 400,000 workers, but slipped from higher totals early in the year.</p> <p>“The labor market is cooling from a red-hot pace, but it’s far from going into a freeze,” said Sarah House, senior economist at Wells Fargo. “It’s hard to get a broad retrenchment in activity when you have 372,000 more individuals receiving paychecks.”</p> <p>Ms. House expects hiring will continue, particularly in services sectors like leisure and hospitality, where demand for vacations and restaurant outings remains strong.</p> <p>The unemployment rate last month, at 3.6%, was a touch above the half-century low reached before the pandemic hit in early 2020. The jobless rate has held at that level for four consecutive months, a sign worker shortages are easing slightly.</p>

Average hourly earnings grew 5.1% in June from a year earlier, a step down from earlier levels. Still, the strong jobs report could keep the Federal Reserve on track [to raise interest rates](#) by 0.75 percentage point at its July meeting.

[U.S. stocks slipped](#) on Friday following the strong jobs report but finished the week with gains. The yield on [the benchmark 10-year Treasury](#) rose.

[Employers hired across industries](#), with the government the only major category to shed jobs in June. Hiring continued in industries vulnerable to interest-rate increases and shifting consumer habits. For instance, construction firms, susceptible to a faltering housing market and higher mortgage rates, added jobs last month. Transportation and warehousing companies hired workers despite a spring pullback of consumer spending on goods.

Job growth continued, although fewer people were looking for work. The number of people in the labor force fell by 353,000 in June. The labor-force participation rate—or the share of adults working or seeking a job—ticked down to 62.2% in June from 62.3% a month earlier. Participation dropped broadly last month, with declines among women, men, workers in their prime ages of 25 to 54 and baby boomers.

[Demand for workers](#) far outpaces unemployed people looking for work.

“The labor market is a bright spot in the recovery,” said Daniel Zhao, senior economist at Glassdoor. “We are continuing to see a strong job market despite concerns about a recession elsewhere in the economy.”

Consumers [are starting to pull back on spending](#) partly because of inflation, which is running at a four-decade high. Home construction is slowing as the Federal Reserve attempts to pull down inflation through aggressive interest-rate increases. Manufacturing production is declining as Americans are reluctant to buy big-ticket items and household goods.

Some economists [think the U.S. is already in a recession](#). Others believe it is likely to slip into one in the next year. [Gross domestic product fell](#) at a 1.6% annual rate in the first quarter. A Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta model closely watched on Wall Street estimates that economic output contracted again in the second quarter, at a 1.2% annual rate.

Many economists expect job growth will slow but say it isn’t clear whether companies will broadly cut jobs as economic output weakens, which is the typical recessionary dynamic. With too few workers for all the available jobs, companies have been reluctant to let go of the workers they have. Jobless claims, a proxy for layoffs, have ticked up in recent months but remain historically low.

Though employment in many industries has recovered beyond February 2020 levels, it remains well below prepandemic levels in leisure and hospitality. Companies in the sector—which includes restaurants and hotels—are trying to find and keep workers after an acute labor shortage followed steep cutbacks at the beginning of the pandemic.

More workers are starting to apply for jobs at Lobster Place Inc., which includes a seafood counter, full-service seafood restaurant and sushi bar in Manhattan’s Chelsea Market. Still, hiring new candidates requires constant recruiting and follow-ups, said Ian MacGregor, the company’s chief executive. Retention is particularly challenging, he said, adding that many recent hires haven’t stayed on for 90 days before they quit or are let go.

Lobster Place has raised wages to attract and retain workers. For instance, a cook makes \$23 an hour, up from about \$17 to \$20 before the pandemic. Higher pay and benefits—such as expanded paid time off and medical benefits—have done little to ease the staffing shortages, Mr. MacGregor said. The four-person executive team is often serving food and drinks, rather than planning a new restaurant, because the company has struggled to hire junior managers.

More customers are eager to dine at Lobster Place as New York City tourism picks up, he said. “And we would love to open a new restaurant, but our biggest friction point for that is labor,” Mr. MacGregor said.

Lobster Place now charges \$23 for a lobster roll, up from \$18.50 in January 2020. So far, customers have been willing to go along with higher menu prices. Mr. MacGregor said he is concerned about how long that tolerance will last.

“I just have to believe that the money that people have saved over the last two years is going to run out,” he said. “At some point customers will push back and say, ‘Look, I can’t pay \$25 for a sandwich anymore, even in New York City.’”

Many companies have cited a pickup in demand for their goods and services as a key reason for their labor needs. That demand is softening as inflation weighs on consumers, spurring many to shift spending habits.

When 32-year-old Jeffrey Miyamoto and his wife noticed how expensive it was to heat their home and dine out, they decided they needed to review their budget earlier this year.

The couple were surprised to see how much they were paying for streaming services and cut out Peacock, Amazon Prime and HBO Max. They only pay for Netflix now. They also stopped using food-delivery services such as DoorDash and Uber Eats, Mr. Miyamoto said.

Mr. Miyamoto, an investment analyst at an asset-management company, said he plans to take fewer international trips this year, including to parts of Asia, where he and his wife have family. “Our families are all far-flung around the world,” he said. “It’s been difficult to cut travel.”

The Woodbridge, Conn., resident has gone to the movie theater more than usual in recent months to see films including “Jurassic World: Dominion,” “Top Gun: Maverick” and “Death on the Nile.” Going to the movies, as well as hiking, camping and tennis, is cheaper than travel, he said.

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HEADLINE	07/09 UK: Ukraine troops arrive for training
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/09/ukrainian-soldiers-arrive-uk-training-british-forces
GIST	<p>British forces have begun training Ukrainian soldiers in a new programme to help in their fight against Russia.</p> <p>Up to 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers will arrive in the UK for specialist military training lasting several weeks. The first cohort met the defence secretary, Ben Wallace, on Thursday, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) confirmed.</p> <p>Wallace, widely expected to launch a campaign to replace Boris Johnson as leader of the Conservative party, described the programme as the next phase of Britain’s support to the Ukrainian army.</p> <p>“Using the world-class expertise of the British army we will help Ukraine to rebuild its forces and scale up its resistance as they defend their country’s sovereignty and their right to choose their own future,” he said.</p> <p>Ukraine is losing up to 200 soldiers every day, meaning that training reinforcements away from the threat of Russian attacks is critical to the country’s war effort.</p> <p>About 1,050 British service personnel are being deployed to run the programme, which will take place at four undisclosed MoD sites across the north-west, south-west and south-east of the UK.</p> <p>The training will give volunteer recruits with little to no military experience the skills to be effective in frontline combat. Based on the UK’s basic soldier training, the course covers weapons handling, battlefield first aid, fieldcraft, patrol tactics and the law of armed conflict.</p>

	<p>The government, which has so far invested £2.3bn in military aid to Ukraine, has also procured AK variant assault rifles for the training, so Ukrainian soldiers can train with the weapons they will be using on the frontline.</p> <p>The US has also been providing training to the Ukrainian military, with senior officers studying at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/09 Day 136 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/09/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-136-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luhansk’s governor said Russian forces were indiscriminately shelling populated areas on Friday, Reuters reports. “They are not stopped even by the fact that civilians remain there, dying in houses and yards,” Serhiy Gaidai said. • Ukraine’s deputy prime minister has asked all residents in the Russian-occupied territories of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions to “evacuate by all possible means”. There would be “harsh battle” as the Ukrainian army would be “de-occupying these territories”, he said. • Belgium will reopen its embassy in Kyiv and send a new ambassador, the Belgian prime minister confirmed. The embassy would open next week and ambassador Peter Van De Velde, whom Alexander De Croo met before he was sent to Ukraine, will represent Belgium. • Ukraine’s military says it has destroyed two Russian command posts near Kherson, according to Natalia Humeniuk, a spokesperson for the joint southern command of Ukraine’s armed forces. • The Ukrainian foreign minister criticised Russia at the G20 summit in Bali, saying it prefers to follow its own rules instead of cooperating multilaterally with the international community. “I am strong supporter of multilateralism,” Dmytro Kuleba said. “But it lacks tools to protect itself from those who disrespect other nations, who prefer to play with common rules instead of playing by the rules. We have such a country at this table today – Russia.” • The Ukrainian parliament adopted a set of new laws on Friday during its plenary session. The new laws include safety guarantees for journalists working in battle areas, improved social protection for rescuers, and postponed transitioning to keep records of the gas volumes in units of energy. • The US is sending four more Himars, or high mobility artillery rocket systems, to Ukraine, a US senior defence official said at a press briefing on Friday. The four additional Himars will bring the total number given to Ukraine to 12. According to the official, the first eight were especially useful as the fighting in Donbas against Russian forces evolved into an artillery fight.
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HEADLINE	07/09 Protesters storm Sri Lanka president home
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/09/sri-lanka-protest-gotabaya-raiapaksa/
GIST	<p>COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Protesters in Sri Lanka stormed the president’s official residence and office Saturday demanding his resignation, marking the latest turn in the deepening economic and political crisis in the island nation. Dozens of people were injured in clashes with the police, hospital officials said.</p> <p>President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, whose family many hold responsible for the worst economic crisis in decades, was moved to safety Friday ahead of the planned protests, according to a defense services official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.</p> <p>Thousands of people carrying the yellow and red Sri Lankan flag marched toward the President’s home chanting “Gota, go home.” The police fired tear gas to deter the surging crowds. The crowd swept past the policemen and breached the barricades to break into the president’s office and residence. Visuals from local media showed people roaming through the president’s house taking selfies and taking a dip in the swimming pool.</p>

	<p>“We are desperate,” said Himantha Wickremarathne, a 34-year-old lawyer who joined the protests. “People from all walks of life have united with one intention — to demand that the corrupt president who clearly does not have a mandate, to step down.”</p> <p>By the afternoon, people began to pour into Colombo from other regions traveling by trains. Sanath Jayasuriya, a former captain of the Sri Lankan cricket team joined protesters at a major protest site. Asking the president to step down he said, “The siege is over. Your bastion has fallen.”</p> <p>Sri Lanka has been in the grip of an unprecedented economic crisis as fuel has nearly run out and food inflation has shot up to 80 percent. It’s defaulted on its foreign debt repayment and is in talks with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout package.</p> <p>For ordinary citizens it has become almost impossible to survive. More than 6 million people or about a fourth of the country’s population is unsure of where the next meal will come from, the World Food Program said last week.</p> <p>In May, the president’s brother, Mahinda was forced to resign as the prime minister after his supporters clashed with anti-government protesters. A new prime minister and cabinet were sworn in but as the economic situation worsens, anger is beginning to spill over again.</p> <p>The specter of more political instability threatens to send the embattled country into a deeper crisis and could undermine its efforts to secure a bailout.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/09 Ukraine and the contest of global stamina
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/09/us/politics/ukraine-strategy-biden.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Another day, another weapons shipment: On Friday, the Pentagon announced a new transfer of precision-guided shells and multiple rocket launchers to Ukraine, the latest armaments heading east. But will there come a day when that system begins to slow?</p> <p>More than four months after Russia invaded Ukraine, a war that was expected to be a Russian blitzkrieg only to turn into a debacle for Moscow has now evolved into a battle of inches with no end in sight, a geopolitical stamina contest in which President Vladimir V. Putin is gambling that he can outlast a fickle, impatient West.</p> <p>President Biden has vowed to stand with Ukraine for “as long as it takes,” but neither he nor anyone else can say how long that will be or how much more the United States and its allies can do over that distance, short of direct military intervention. At some point, officials acknowledge, U.S. and European stocks of weapons will run low; while the United States has authorized \$54 billion in military and other assistance, no one expects another \$54 billion check when that runs out.</p> <p>So Mr. Biden and his team are searching for a long-term strategy at a time when the White House sees the dangers of escalation increasing, the prospect for a negotiated settlement still far-off and public weariness beginning to set in at home and abroad.</p> <p>“I worry about the fatigue factor of the public in a wide range of countries because of the economic costs and because there are other pressing concerns,” said Senator Chris Coons, Democrat of Delaware and a close ally of Mr. Biden’s who attended the NATO summit meeting in Madrid last week.</p> <p>“I think we need to be determined and continue to support Ukraine,” said Mr. Coons, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. “Exactly how long this will go, exactly what the trajectory will be, we don’t know right now. But we know if we don’t continue to support Ukraine, the outcome for the U.S. will be much worse.”</p>

While the fighting lately has focused mainly on a crescent in eastern and southern Ukraine, the White House worries it could easily spiral out of control. A recent [missile strike on a shopping center](#) in central Ukraine suggested that Moscow was running low on precision weaponry and increasingly turning to less sophisticated armaments that could hit unintended targets — potentially even across the border, in NATO allies like Poland or Romania. And American officials worry that Mr. Putin may [resort to tactical nuclear weapons](#) to break out of the box he faces on the battlefield.

Indeed, the Biden administration has concluded that the Russian leader still wants to widen the war and try again to seize Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital. “We think he has effectively the same political goals that we had previously, which is to say that he wants to take most of Ukraine,” Avril D. Haines, the director of national intelligence, [said at a conference](#) last week.

Mr. Putin almost seemed to confirm that on Thursday, when he warned that he had more expansive options available. “Everybody should know that, largely speaking, we haven’t even yet started anything in earnest,” [he told parliamentary leaders](#) in Moscow.

“We are hearing that they want to defeat us on the battlefield,” Mr. Putin added. “Let them try.”

U.S. officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss strategy deliberations, are urging the Ukrainians to consolidate their forces at the front. But Ukraine’s leaders want to go further and mass enough personnel to mount a counteroffensive to retake territory, a goal that American officials support in theory even if they are dubious about the Ukrainians’ capacity to dislodge the Russians. President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine told Group of 7 leaders last week that he [wanted the war over by the end of the year](#). But there are serious doubts in Washington about whether that is possible militarily.

The Biden administration does not want to be seen pressuring Mr. Zelensky to negotiate a deal with the Kremlin at the risk of rewarding armed aggression, but officials and analysts said it would be hard to sustain the same level of material support as war fatigue grows on both sides of the Atlantic. Military aid passed by Congress is expected to last into the second quarter of next year, by some estimates, but the question is how long current supplies of weapons and ammunition can last without degrading the military readiness of the United States.

American officials have encouraged other countries to provide leftover stores of Soviet-made weaponry that Ukrainians are more familiar with — an item on Mr. Biden’s agenda for a trip to the Middle East next week, when he is scheduled to meet with leaders of Arab states that were once clients of Moscow.

“There is a lot of running room, but clearly there is this sense that the next six months are really critical,” said Ivo H. Daalder, the president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and a former U.S. ambassador to NATO. “In the next six months, we’re going to find out one or both sides are too exhausted, and they’re going to look for a way out.”

The Biden administration is also focusing on winning over the swing states, as some call them: Brazil, China, India and other countries that have not joined the campaign by the United States and Europe to isolate Moscow. A diplomatic effort would seek to show them that Ukraine and the United States would be open to a negotiated settlement as long as there are no territorial concessions, making the point that it is Russia that refuses to end the war.

As uncertain as the next few months are, the administration argues that it has met or will meet some of the strategic objectives it set in the spring. The first was to make sure that a “vibrant, independent, democratic Ukraine” emerged that would be able to survive over the long term. Officials are convinced that the country will survive — but they also believe that unless Ukraine develops a way to export grain and other agricultural products, its economic future could be in jeopardy.

The second objective was to make sure the invasion was a “strategic failure” for Russia. U.S. officials believe the country is now so isolated, and under such heavy economic sanctions, to put that goal within

reach. But the worry is that Mr. Putin will have time to regroup, launch new attacks and seek to carve off another part of Ukraine.

The third objective was to keep the war from escalating into a direct superpower conflict. On that score, U.S. officials said they were succeeding — and that all the evidence showed that Mr. Putin was being careful, at least so far, to avoid military engagement with NATO allies.

The fourth objective was the hardest: to strengthen the international order around Western values. NATO is being strengthened, officials argue, both because it has remained unified and because it is now all but certain to [expand to include Finland and Sweden](#). But so far, Mr. Biden has not talked much about what that new American-centric order might look like.

Some officials, including Mr. Biden, cringed when Defense Secretary [Lloyd J. Austin III said](#) in April that “we want to see Russia weakened to the degree that it can’t do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine.”

The president called Mr. Austin to remonstrate him for the comment, then directed his staff to leak the fact that he had done so. But officials acknowledged that was indeed the long-term strategy, even if Mr. Biden did not want to publicly provoke Mr. Putin into escalation.

As much as he has held the alliance together, orchestrated punishing sanctions against Moscow and provided extensive matériel to Ukraine, Mr. Biden is still under pressure to be more aggressive.

“Everything the administration has done in terms of providing support has been fantastic,” said Evelyn N. Farkas, the executive director of the McCain Institute for International Leadership and a former Obama administration official. “All I can say is we need more of it faster.”

She said Mr. Biden should not limit his ambitions to keeping the Russians in the east. “We need to help the Ukrainians actually launch an offensive,” she said, “not just hold some ground and keep them away from Kyiv.”

In the administration, significant tension remains over whether Mr. Biden is being too cautious in the kinds of weapons he is sending to Ukraine and how quickly. The decision to provide [HIMARS rocket launchers](#) was much debated because of fears that it would lead to escalation.

That concern was heightened when the Ukrainians declared several days ago that they had used the system to strike an arms depot in Russian territory; it is not clear whether that occurred as described, or if it did, whether it violated commitments made to Washington to use the system only within Ukrainian borders.

American intelligence assessments suggest that it will take several years for the Russians to rebuild the equipment that has been destroyed in the war, and that export controls on chips and other technologies will slow, if not stymie, that effort.

Mr. Coons said the West needed to be as patient as Mr. Putin.

“As long as we stay the course, our European allies will stay the course,” he said. “But this is a long way from over.”

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HEADLINE	07/08 Tourism shifts into high gear in Seattle
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/business/tourism-shifts-into-high-gear-in-seattle-as-hospitality-sector-struggles-to-hire-workers
GIST	SEATTLE — For many consumers, spending is shifting from home furnishings, appliances and other personal goods to hotels, restaurants, bars and attractions.

But the transfer has resulted in greater demand from vacationers and is now forcing the tourism and hospitality industry to work overtime as the sector struggles to hire enough staff to cater to all those tourists.

"Staffing in hiring is really tough all around," said Karen Olson, COO at Seattle's iconic Space Needle, which draws customers from around the world, adding that the attraction's current tourism season is nearing pre-pandemic levels. The center traditionally doubles its staff every summer from 200 employees to 400.

She said they were able to hit their employment number by recruiting more high school kids and foreign exchange students.

"We've got students from Poland, Czech Republic, Spain, France," she said.

The staffing numbers in the hotel industry are not so great.

"They're 44 percent short of the workforce they need to have a successful season," said Anthony Anton, president and CEO of the Washington Hospitality Association.

That amounts to more than 5,000 people the hospitality industry needs to hire now.

And many hotels are upping the ante to attract workers.

About 90 percent of hotel managers say they increased wages, according to a new survey from the American Hotel & Lodging Association. And 71 percent now offer flexible hours along with 43n percent in expanded benefits.

Jared Prince, general manager for the Seattle/Tacoma area McMenamins Hotels & Pubs, said his company added hiring bonuses last spring.

He said his company tripled its workforce over the past three months, but is still running short of workers to manage duties for the kitchen and banquets.

The company has resorted to bringing workers from Oregon to help cover some big events they've got scheduled in the coming weeks.

Anton said it is going to take more than just better pay and benefits or flexible hours.

"Don't just put up a sign and put a post on LinkedIn and pray," he said. "You've got to become a hunter, and in a positive way. Go to the high schools, go to the community colleges, talk about our industry, build relationships, be competitive."

He said he's also telling hiring managers to go to the places where they've experienced great hospitality and try to recruit employees there.

"Say, 'Hey, would you like to come work for me? I've got different hours, give our industry chance,'" Anton said.

Olson says they're also finding it tough to hire people for the kitchen and guest safety, but she says the company has several built-in advantages.

"We're a little bit lucky, as we're the symbol of the city with the Space Needle and Chihuly Garden and Glass," she said. "Who doesn't wanna work 500 feet in the air or in a glass house of glass garden?"

Plus, they've learned that people really like to work with their friends.

	“We’re really pushing that referral program so if you refer your friend, you can get up to \$1,000 for referring the friend and your buddy can get up to \$1,000 for getting the job,” Olson said.
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HEADLINE	07/08 KCSO transformation toward police reform
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/king-county-sheriffs-office-announces-new-board-aimed-at-police-reform-community-connections/
GIST	<p>BURIEN — The King County Sheriff’s Office will create two new divisions and a new community advisory board, the first steps of what new Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall envisions as a multiyear transformation in how the office polices and interacts with the community.</p> <p>The Sheriff’s Office, Cole-Tindall said, will reorganize, from three divisions to five, including a new community programs and services division. County Executive Dow Constantine will also create a new community advisory board to advise him and the sheriff on how the office should function.</p> <p>There are no firm timelines for the changes, but Cole-Tindall, who began serving as interim sheriff on Jan. 1 and has been the permanent sheriff for two months, said she hoped both would be functioning by the end of the year.</p> <p>“It’s important to me that we in the Sheriff’s Office police with compassion,” said Cole-Tindall, who’s spent most of her career outside of law enforcement. “What that means to me is that we meet people where they are; we try to understand what is the root cause of why they have committed a crime. Is it because they’re hungry? They don’t have food to eat, or they’re unhoused? I mean, what is it? And we have a responsibility to connect those people to resources.”</p> <p>The community programs division will seek to create and enhance connections with local organizations — Cole-Tindall mentioned the NAACP and Community Passageways as examples — to try to provide more services than traditional law enforcement is able to.</p> <p>“Right now, what happens is we do our work, and then we’re out,” Cole-Tindall said. “It feels to me like that’s not complete. We aren’t taking care of the community in that way.”</p> <p>At a shooting, for instance, there is the person who has been shot, but there are also witnesses, the family of the victim, the family of the perpetrator.</p> <p>“They’re victims too in this,” Cole-Tindall said, and a goal of the new division would be to connect them with services. “Often, we know, when there’s a shooting, sometimes there’s escalation if people don’t come in and help de-escalate.”</p> <p>It remains unclear how much staffing will be in the new division and if it will be led by a commissioned officer or other staff.</p> <p>The second new division within the office will be a special operations division, which will house expensive and high-risk units like SWAT, air patrol, the marine unit, the bomb unit and crisis negotiations. Those units are all currently housed in one of the office’s three existing divisions: technical services, patrol operations and criminal investigations.</p> <p>The details of the community advisory board — official duties, how many members and how often it will meet — remain unclear. It will ultimately operate under Constantine’s authority after voters in 2020 chose to make sheriff a position appointed by the county executive, rather than an independently elected official.</p> <p>“This is going to be another avenue for that community trust where we are showing that we want to hear from the community,” Cole-Tindall said.</p>

	<p>All of the changes, Constantine said, are part of the broader movement toward police reform and creating a structure where community safety is not just the job of police.</p> <p>“There are some things that only police can do,” Constantine said. “But we’ve gotten as a society, I think, lazy and just rely on government with a badge and a gun to parachute in and solve a problem that’s actually quite complex and involves a lot more members of the community.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/09 Arizona law limits filming police
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/in-era-of-transparency-arizona-law-limits-filming-police/
GIST	<p>PHOENIX (AP) — Arizona’s governor has signed a law that restricts how the public can video police at a time when there’s growing pressure across the U.S. for greater law enforcement transparency.</p> <p>Civil rights and media groups opposed the measure that Republican Gov. Doug Ducey signed Thursday. The law makes it illegal in Arizona to knowingly video police officers 8 feet (2.5 meters) or closer without an officer’s permission.</p> <p>Someone on private property with the owner’s consent can also be ordered to stop recording if a police officer finds they are interfering or the area is not safe. The penalty is a misdemeanor that would likely incur a fine without jail time.</p> <p>There needs to be a law that protects officers from people who “either have very poor judgment or sinister motives,” said Republican Rep. John Kavanagh, the bill’s sponsor.</p> <p>“I’m pleased that a very reasonable law that promotes the safety of police officers and those involved in police stops and bystanders has been signed into law,” Kavanagh said Friday. “It promotes everybody’s safety yet still allows people to reasonably videotape police activity as is their right.”</p> <p>The move comes nearly a year after the U.S. Department of Justice launched a widespread probe into the police force in Phoenix to examine whether officers have been using excessive force and abusing people experiencing homelessness. It’s similar to other investigations opened in recent months in Minneapolis and Louisville.</p> <p>The Phoenix Police Department, which oversees the nation’s fifth-largest city, has been criticized in recent years for its use of force, which disproportionately affects Black and Native American residents.</p> <p>The law has left opponents like K.M. Bell, staff attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union of Arizona, incredulous.</p> <p>Federal appellate courts already have ruled that recording police is “a clearly established right,” according to Bell.</p> <p>The law won’t work in real-life scenarios.</p> <p>“We’re talking about people being in public and a place they have a right to be. We’re not talking about, like somebody breaking into the (National Security Agency),” Bell said.</p> <p>Kavanagh, who was a police officer for 20 years, amended the legislation so it applies to certain types of police actions, including questioning of suspects and encounters involving mental or behavioral health issues.</p> <p>The law also makes exceptions for people who are the direct subject of police interaction. They can film as long as they are not being arrested or searched. Someone who is in a car stopped by police or is being questioned can also film the encounter.</p>

“Those exceptions were based upon input from all sorts of people, including the ACLU,” he said.

Rumblings two years ago about anti-police groups who deliberately approach officers while filming inspired draft legislation. There was a risk of an officer being injured or a suspect escaping or ditching evidence, Kavanagh said.

The Rev. Jarrett Maupin, a Phoenix activist, has represented victims of excessive force by police. Some of the cases received more publicity because video captured by bystanders was posted online.

In one case, a Black couple had police officers point guns at them in front of their children in May 2019 after their young daughter took a doll from a store without their knowledge. They received a \$475,000 settlement from the city.

Maupin believes the law is a tactic to help police avoid responsibility.

“Proximity is not a luxury in terms of documenting the actions of officers who engage in acts of brutality,” Maupin said. Sometimes the victims and the bystanders have no choice but to be within the proximity that the bill now prohibits.”

Bell said it’s unlikely that other states might follow suit to limit police recording directly given questions about constitutionality.

The new law doesn’t make exceptions for the press.

Media groups including The Associated Press said the measure raises serious constitutional issues. They signed onto a letter from the National Press Photographers Association, or NPPA, in opposition to the bill.

Setting one-size-fits-all conditions like “arbitrary distances” of 8 feet (2.5 meters) for filming police just doesn’t work, said Mickey Osterreicher, general counsel for the NPPA. It’s also unclear if someone is breaking the law if an officer approaches them within a few feet.

“What happens when you’re in situations like we saw during all of the protests for the past couple of years, where you have multiple people with cameras? We’re not just talking about journalists,” Osterreicher said. “And you’ve got multiple police officers. Is everybody going to be running around with a ruler?”

Cellphone cameras have transformed policing with one of the biggest examples being the 2020 killing of George Floyd, but Kavanagh said a law like Arizona’s wouldn’t have made an impact since the video in that case was taken from a greater distance away.

Osterreicher argued a police officer could invoke the law even if the person filming is far enough away.

But that didn’t happen in the Floyd case.

“Fortunately, those officers out of all the wrong things that they did, the one thing they didn’t do was tell her to turn off the camera or try to interfere with her recording,” Osterreicher said.

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HEADLINE	07/08 UW scientists develop new Covid vaccine
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/new-covid-vaccine-developed-by-uw-scientists/
GIST	A COVID-19 vaccine developed by UW Medicine researchers has been approved in Korea, becoming the first COVID therapeutic technology from the Seattle health care system to be greenlighted for patient use.

UW Medicine scientists who worked on the technology behind the vaccine say their version is a “second-generation” COVID immunization that’s protein-based — different from the mRNA vaccines developed by Pfizer and Moderna. As a result, the vaccine, trademarked as SKYCovione, is effective in low doses, simple to manufacture and stable without deep freezing, said Neil King and David Veessler, both UW Medicine biochemistry professors and vaccine co-developers.

“We had already been working together before the pandemic, but when the pandemic hit, it was just this immediate, ‘Let’s do this’ joining of the forces between our two groups, which was really fun and highly productive,” King said.

The vaccine, which was approved for patient use by the Korean Ministry of Food and Drug Safety last week, is now pursuing authorization in the U.K. and other countries, according to a UW Medicine statement. If the vaccine is approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization, it will become available through COVAX, an international effort to distribute vaccines equitably around the world.

UW Medicine is licensing the vaccine technology royalty-free for as long as the pandemic lasts, the statement said. Several donors, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, National Institutes of Health and Pew Charitable Trust, among others, also helped fund the vaccine development.

It’s unclear whether the team will pursue U.S. Food and Drug Administration licensure in the future, instead focusing on getting shots to more undervaccinated countries.

“We’ve heard stories about wealthy countries giving doses to lower and middle income countries, and then ... pointing fingers at receiving countries for not being able to use them [before they expire],” Veessler said. “That doesn’t really make sense.

“These are anecdotes, but they’re still stories that happen,” he added. “These superior storage properties might make a huge difference to reach people who still have not received vaccines.”

King’s lab designed the vaccine’s self-assembling protein nanoparticle technology — a vaccine-building strategy the lab developed in 2016. Veessler’s team integrated a key fragment of the coronavirus’ spike protein onto the nanoparticles.

SKYCovione, unlike Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, is made of proteins that form tiny particles studded with fragments of SARS-COV-2. That property makes the vaccine more stable and could enable broader vaccination efforts in parts of the world where medical and storage resources are harder to find, King said.

Protein-based vaccines are considered more traditional, King added, and have been used for decades to protect against hepatitis and other viral infections.

The researchers knew early on in the pandemic that while they were chipping away at building the technology behind the vaccine, manufacturing and distribution would be key.

So, through connections at the Gates Foundation, King and Veessler were introduced to South Korean biotech company SK bioscience, which has in-house vaccine manufacturing resources and has long developed immunizations abroad.

“In March and April 2020, we were already talking with SK and transferring our technology to them to really build that groundwork,” King said. “They did all the manufacturing and did all the clinical trials.”

The vaccine is South Korea’s first domestically manufactured COVID therapeutic, according to a statement from SK bioscience. The South Korean government has agreed to buy 10 million doses for domestic use.

	<p>In clinical trials, the vaccine was tested among more than 4,000 adults over the age of 18 and found to elicit about three times more antibodies than Covishield, the vaccine developed by AstraZeneca that does not have FDA approval, according to UW Medicine. The antibody conversion rate — the proportion of participants whose antibody levels increased fourfold or more — was also much higher with the UW-developed vaccine compared to Covishield.</p> <p>No serious adverse reactions were recorded in any of the clinical trials.</p> <p>While SKYCovione is arriving to the global public almost a year and a half after mRNA vaccines, its development has been “unbelievably fast” for protein-based vaccines, King said.</p> <p>“Manufacturing speed is the key advantage of mRNA,” he said. “It just takes longer to manufacture proteins ... But once you have it booted up, it scales beautifully.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/08 Gun deaths beyond mass shootings
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/interactive/2022/gun-deaths-per-year-usa/
GIST	<p>The spate of shooting attacks in communities such as Highland Park, Illinois; Uvalde, Texas; and Buffalo, New York, has riveted attention on the staggering number of public mass killings in the United States. But the rising number of gun deaths extends beyond such high-profile episodes, emerging nearly every day inside homes, outside bars and on the streets of many cities, according to federal data.</p> <p>The surge in gun violence comes as firearm purchases rose to record levels in 2020 and 2021, with more than 43 million guns estimated to have been purchased during that period, according to a Washington Post analysis of federal data on gun background checks. At the same time, the rate of gun deaths in those years hit the highest level since 1995, with more than 45,000 fatalities each year.</p> <p>Guns account for most suicides and are almost entirely responsible for an overall rise in homicides across the country from 2018 to 2021, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>Over the long holiday weekend, when seven people were killed and dozens wounded at a Fourth of July parade in Highland Park, numerous other fatal shootings played out across the country. In nearby Chicago, 10 people were killed and more than 60 wounded in a string of shootings over the weekend. One person was killed and four were wounded in a shooting outside a Sacramento, California, nightclub. Two people were fatally shot at a home in Haltom City, Texas, and a neighbor and three police officers were injured. A man was fatally shot in Clinton, North Carolina; hours later, six people, including two children, were injured in a separate shooting there.</p> <p>There is not one clear answer as to what is driving the rise in bloodshed, experts said, but possible factors include the stress of the coronavirus pandemic, fraying ties between the police and the public, mounting anger, worsening mental strain and the sheer number of guns in the United States.</p> <p>“You put all that into a pressure cooker,” said Alex Piquero, a criminologist at the University of Miami, “and you let the pressure cooker blow up.”</p> <p>Local leaders, law enforcement officials and anti-violence advocates say they have seen a worrisome trend recently, in which disputes that would have previously led to fistfights instead escalated rapidly to gunfire.</p> <p>“What we’re seeing is a different type of violence here in Pittsburgh,” said the Rev. Eileen Smith, executive director of the South Pittsburgh Coalition for Peace, a nonprofit that includes violence interrupters. “They’re not fighting, at least not outside of school. They’re killing.”</p>

The ample access to guns plays a significant role, experts said. Americans are arming themselves in the face of deepening fears and divisions, frightening public incidents involving gunfire or violence, or simply because they know others may also have guns.

Data shows that gun sales increase in the wake of violence, political events and uncertainty. Large spikes occurred after the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting in Connecticut; amid coronavirus shutdowns, racial justice protests and the presidential election in 2020; and after the Jan. 6, 2021, siege of the U.S. Capitol.

With an estimated 400 million guns in the country, a figure that eclipses the U.S. population, “there is a self-fulfilling prophecy of, ‘I need a gun because everyone else around me has a gun,’” said Sasha Cotton, director of the Minneapolis Office of Violence Prevention.

The agonizing frequency of nonfatal shootings and firearm deaths, experts said, has become a uniquely American phenomenon.

“Many other countries have disadvantaged folks who are angry and alienated,” said Richard Berk, a professor emeritus of criminology and statistics at the University of Pennsylvania. “But guns aren’t there.”

Mass killings, particularly those in which a gunman opens fire in a crowded public space, tend to draw much more attention than daily violence. But these shootings represent a fraction of gun violence overall, said Jillian Peterson, an associate professor of criminology and criminal justice at Hamline University and co-founder of the Violence Project, which studies mass killers.

With a mass shooting defined as four or more people killed, Peterson said, such cases account for fewer than 1% of all people killed by firearms. They are “very rare, still, even though they’re increasing,” she said. But, Peterson said, it’s not an accident that they receive so much more attention.

“Mass shootings, by design, [are] meant to go viral in that sense. That’s the goal of them, is fame, is notoriety,” she said. And these public mass shootings have a “psychological impact” on people, instilling fear of going to the movies or a grocery store, she said.

Monday’s rampage in Illinois marked the 15th time this year that four or more people were killed in a shooting, according to the Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit that maintains a database of incidents of gun violence.

The vast majority of gun deaths in the United States are either suicides or homicides, according to federal data, with accidental or undetermined gun deaths representing a small fraction of the overall share.

Two demographic groups bear the brunt of escalating gun violence and are most likely to die of a gunshot wound in the United States: young Black men and older White men.

White men are six times as likely to die by suicide as other Americans. Black men are 17 times as likely to be killed with a gun fired by someone else.

About 60% of the gun deaths in the United States each year are suicides, according to CDC data spanning the past 20 years.

Firearms accounted for about 8% of suicide attempts but slightly more than 50% of the 47,511 suicide deaths in 2019, according to the American Association of Suicidology. Men are nearly four times as likely as women to succeed in a suicide attempt, mainly because they are much more likely to use a gun.

Of the 90,498 gun deaths in 2020 and 2021, 38,796 were homicides. Nearly 21,000 of those victims were Black men.

Cotton, in Minneapolis, said the higher homicide toll among Black people brought to mind the saying: When America gets a cold, Black America gets the flu.

“Of course it’s worse,” she said. “COVID was worse for us. Gun violence is worse for us. And the trickle-down effect will continue to be worse for us, until there’s equity in our systems and in our society.”

Data shows gun deaths surged almost everywhere in the United States in 2020, “a very broad phenomenon” and one that “was almost as intense outside of metro areas as it was inside of metropolitan areas,” said Philip Cook, a Duke University professor emeritus of public policy and economics.

In 2020, while the overall crime rate nationwide fell, “that was not true for shootings,” Cook said. That year, he said, there was an “unparalleled” surge in people killed by firearms compared with 2019.

Some states, including New Jersey, have tightened gun laws in recent weeks, in response to recent shootings and a Supreme Court decision that expanded gun-carry rights outside the home. At the federal level, Congress last month approved, and President Joe Biden signed, gun-control legislation that provides funding for mental health services and school security initiatives and expands criminal background checks for some gun buyers.

Determining the precise number of guns sold in the United States each year is difficult. The data does not capture weapon sales from private sellers at gun shows or online marketplaces, because law does not require them to submit background checks. Firearm sales estimates are based on methodology applied to FBI National Instant Criminal Background Check System data surveying handgun, long-gun and multiple-gun background checks leading to purchases.

There is little consensus as to why gun sales and deaths have jumped so much over the past two years. The only clear thing, Cook said, is that “the increase in homicide was almost entirely an increase in gun homicide.” Beyond that, it is difficult to parse all the things happening at once. Even the theories that have been floated about the rise in violence have weaknesses, experts said, adding that there is a lack of good research about what is driving the increase.

Some experts theorize that the pandemic helped drive the surge in killings. But gun deaths started rising in 2015 before spiking five years later, said Andrew Morral, a behavioral scientist at the Rand Corp. and leader of its Gun Policy in America initiative.

The rise in gun sales, he said, might also play a role. “But the real question in my mind is: Is that the key driver? Does that explain a lot of the jump or a little of the jump?” he said. “And I don’t know.”

Homicide rates remained low for more than two decades before 2015, “even as the number of guns in circulation was increasing,” Morral said. If the gun sales drove the spike, why did that not happen over those decades?

Morral said one theory — claiming that police pulled back in response to racial justice protests and calls to cut funding in 2020 — has problems because the surge in violence happened across the board, in urban areas and rural ones, in blue cities and red. American policing is decentralized, with some 15,000 local departments and sheriff’s offices, most of them employing no more than two dozen officers.

Morral said that there is some evidence of police pulling back but that “making the link from depolicing to homicides is a big jump.” To grow “beyond anecdote,” he said, more research is needed.

“There’s certainly people who will claim it’s not mysterious and point at one thing or another,” said Berk, of the University of Pennsylvania. “But I haven’t heard a coherent narrative which integrates all the pieces. And I’m not sure we’ll ever have one.”

Cook, of Duke, said increased efforts to solve shootings could help get a handle on the surge in violence, even if its precise drivers are unknown. Police nationwide in 2020 “cleared” about half of all homicides, according to the FBI, which usually means that someone was arrested and charged or the case was closed another way, including the death of the attacker.

Solving more shootings, particularly nonfatal ones, “would interrupt the cycle of retaliation,” Cook said, and might improve local trust in the police. “That would be a productive use of money,” he said.

It is also difficult to determine exactly who will commit gun violence, though research shows that politicians and others may be focusing too much attention on one factor, particularly when it comes to mass shootings.

In the wake of mass shootings, politicians are often quick to invoke mental health.

“Anybody who shoots somebody else has a mental health challenge. Period,” Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, said shortly after the Uvalde shooting in May.

But three decades of research has established that people with mental illness are responsible for just a small percentage of interpersonal and gun violence.

Numerous studies have reached the same conclusion: While people with illnesses such as schizophrenia have a somewhat greater risk of committing violent acts than other members of the public, and substance use increases that risk, the vast majority of people with mental illness never perpetrate violence. In fact, they are more likely to be victims of violence.

There is one major, well-established connection between mental illness and gun violence: suicide. A Rand report summarizing other studies found higher rates of suicide among people with mental health issues that included depression and schizophrenia.

It’s clear that many other factors are more closely associated with gun violence than mental illness. They include experiencing trauma and violence during childhood, being young and male, living in neighborhoods where violence is more prevalent, poor impulse control, poor anger control and, perhaps most of all, easy access to a firearm.

“To think we’re going to lower population-level violence rates by better treatment of mental illness, we’re not going to get there doing that,” said Daniel Webster, who studies gun violence policy at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Instead, he said, officials must help create environments where there is less trauma in the home, support families and strengthen services for children in schools.

In 1994, Duke gun violence researcher Jeffrey Swanson calculated that if all active psychotic and mood disorders were eliminated overnight, interpersonal violence would be reduced by just 4%. In many other countries, guns are tightly restricted, but the United States has taken a different route, he said.

“We don’t have gun control as much as we have people control,” he said. “We try to figure out the people who are so dangerous that we have to limit their access to guns.”

The 1998 MacArthur Violence Risk Assessment Study, which followed 951 people who had been released from three psychiatric facilities, found that 23 committed 67 acts of interpersonal gun violence — a rate of 2% — in the next year. Just 19 of those acts, committed by nine people, were against strangers.

Research conducted in 2020 by a team led by Swanson found that among people in Florida with serious mental illnesses, including some who were committed to a psychiatric facility involuntarily or for a

short-term emergency hold, 0.9% were arrested in connection with a violent crime involving a gun within seven years — about the same rate as the general population.

Recent years have been brutal for Americans' mental health, with the CDC finding that rates of anxiety and depression tripled nationwide. But there is no reason to believe that is responsible for rising gun violence over the past two years, said Jennifer Skeem, a clinical psychologist and professor of public policy and social welfare at the University of California at Berkeley.

The consistent invocations of mental health after massacres such as those in Buffalo, Uvalde and Highland Park are ways for officials to distance themselves from the horror of the event, to explain the unfathomable, Skeem said.

"It's a tragedy that demands explanation, and the stigma of mental illness is something that fuels pseudo-explanations," she said. "It's a fake explanation. Why has this man done this terrible thing? The answer is because he's mentally ill. How do you know he's mentally ill? Because he's done this terrible thing."

The most common mass killings, Peterson said, are those that typically get the least public attention: household killings, in which someone kills their relatives and then themselves.

In that sense, those mass killings have something in common with most other gun violence in the United States: People tend to know their killers, according to FBI data.

"Commonly, the victim and the perpetrator know each other or know about each other," Berk said. "They're not total strangers. It makes it even more sad."

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HEADLINE	07/08 Experts: losing fight against monkeypox
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/08/health/monkeypox-vaccine-treatment.html
GIST	<p>As epidemics go, the monkeypox outbreak should have been relatively easy to snuff out. The virus does not spread efficiently except through intimate contact, and tests and vaccines were at hand even before the current outbreak.</p> <p>Yet the response in the United States has been sluggish and timid, reminiscent of the early days of the Covid pandemic, experts say, raising troubling questions about the nation's preparedness for pandemic threats.</p> <p>The first cases of monkeypox were reported in May, but tests will not be readily available until sometime this month. Vaccines will be in short supply for months longer. Surveillance is spotty, and official case counts are likely a gross underestimate.</p> <p>There are already at least 700 cases in the United States, but experts say the real number is likely to be much higher. There probably will be many more infections before the outbreak can be controlled, if at this point it can be controlled at all.</p> <p>"Why is it so hard for something that's even a known pathogen?" asked Anne Rimoin, an epidemiologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, who first warned of monkeypox outbreaks more than a decade ago. "How many more times do we have to go through this?"</p> <p>With increasing travel and trade, new pathogens will emerge more frequently, Dr. Rimoin said: "We've been hitting the snooze button on emerging diseases for decades. The alarm is going off, and it's time to wake up."</p> <p>The obstacles to preparedness are systemic, at every level of government, rather than because of any one individual or agency, Dr. Rimoin and other experts said.</p>

Even as the coronavirus pandemic drags into its third year, the public health system in the United States remains a hamstrung patchwork, an underfunded bureaucracy seemingly incapable of swift and forceful action. Its shortcomings have persisted for decades, through many administrations.

The United States [estimated in 2010](#), for example, that in the event of a bioterrorist attack, 132 million doses of a vaccine for smallpox and monkeypox would be required for those who cannot safely take an older-generation vaccine with harsh side effects. Yet two months after the current outbreak began, the strategic national stockpile holds just 64,000 doses.

The situation “reveals the failure in the U.S. to take public health seriously,” said Zain Rizvi, who studies access to medicines at the advocacy group Public Citizen. “Do we ever run out of fighter jets?”

It’s often unclear which agency is ultimately responsible for a particular aspect of the response. The [strategic national stockpile](#) used to be under the purview of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for example. The Trump administration handed it to a [different agency](#), yet the C.D.C. still makes decisions about who should get the vaccine and when.

State and county-level health departments often set their own rules and priorities, sometimes at odds with federal guidance. “The machine is just so ossified,” said [Gregg Gonsalves](#), an activist and epidemiologist at the Yale School of Public Health. The “house is on fire, and it’s like everything is moving at sort of normal speed.”

The global monkeypox toll has surpassed 8,100 cases, mostly men who have sex with men, and about as many potential cases are under investigation. Many of those patients cannot identify the source of their infections, suggesting that there is significant community transmission.

In the United States, the C.D.C. has found at least two versions of the virus, indicating at least two parallel chains of transmission.

“It’s pretty clear that we need to rapidly scale up the ability to diagnose this now,” said Jay Varma, director of the Cornell Center for Pandemic Prevention and Response.

The first missteps in the U.S. response to monkeypox were in testing. As in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, samples from monkeypox patients are being funneled to the C.D.C. for final diagnosis, a process that can take days. Only recently have tests been shipped [to commercial laboratories](#); one of them began offering testing on Wednesday.

A network of about 70 public health labs set up by the C.D.C. has the capacity to identify orthopoxviruses, the family that includes smallpox and monkeypox. But local doctors must first get clearance from a state epidemiologist, then somehow get the samples to one of the labs, the same process used in early 2020 to identify coronavirus infections.

Local health departments trace contacts only after a confirmed diagnosis, allowing the chain of transmission to continue in the meantime.

“We clearly identified this as a major mistake that allowed Covid to get its footprint in the U.S. and spread undetected for a month, without any of us knowing,” said Angela Rasmussen, a research scientist at the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada.

“And now we’re just doing the same thing all over again, because that’s the way it’s done.”

The C.D.C. should have made testing rapidly available to glean the extent of the outbreak early on, she added: “Our failure to do that has almost certainly allowed the outbreak to become much bigger than it could have been, and now I have serious doubts about whether it can even be contained.”

In San Francisco, B, a 43-year-old medical writer who asked that his name be withheld for privacy reasons, found himself shivering uncontrollably with a high fever on June 14, eight days after he had multiple sexual encounters at a bathhouse in Chicago.

When a blister appeared on B's wrist on Friday afternoon, he suspected monkeypox. But his health care provider said the city's health department would not be able to pick up his sample till Tuesday, June 21, after the Juneteenth holiday.

No one reached out to him to ask about his contacts, or to offer vaccines to his roommate or partner. It was Friday, a week later, before the sample was picked up, and the following Wednesday — nearly two weeks after he had contacted his health care provider — before he was told he had tested positive for an orthopoxvirus.

By then, his lesions had healed, and he no longer needed to isolate. "The irony of this happening on the same day as receiving the first test result is not lost on me," he said.

Even then, the health department told him it would likely be another week before the C.D.C. could confirm that he had monkeypox.

"Two blisters and a rash on my butt is not the worst I've had in my life," B said. But given his experience, "I don't think we're prepared for another pandemic of something that's actually serious."

A senior Biden administration official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal matters, acknowledged that implementation of monkeypox testing had not been as convenient nor fast as it needed to be.

Negotiations between government officials and commercial labs began in the third week of May, soon after the first cases were identified, he said. But it took time to settle contracts, scale up test supplies and train personnel to handle the virus.

Still, the official noted, the C.D.C. published [test procedures](#) in early June, and the F.D.A. authorized additional test supplies to allow any interested lab to participate. The wait time for test results has dropped from 15 days to nine days from the start of symptoms, and is expected to drop further as lab capacity expands in July, he said.

Another barrier to containing a disease like monkeypox [is a dearth of sexual health clinics](#), as Dr. Varma noted in a recent opinion article in The New York Times.

Monkeypox was thought to present as a body-wide rash, but in the current outbreak, most patients have developed only a few pox, primarily in the genital area. Patients with genital symptoms are much more likely to seek care at sexual health clinics, because they tend to offer confidentiality, convenience and free or low-cost care.

But funding for these clinics has dropped by about 40 percent since 2003, after accounting for inflation. Partly as a result of the decline, about [one in five Americans](#) had a sexually transmitted infection in 2018, according to a C.D.C. report, and those numbers have [surged during the pandemic](#).

If monkeypox can't be contained, it may become a permanent threat, especially among men who have sex with men. "The fear is that this will become entrenched as an S.T.I., you know, just like, say, syphilis is, or H.I.V. for that matter," Dr. Varma said.

"Without a lot of high quality sexual health services, you're never going to be able to control it, because you won't identify people fast enough," he added.

	<p>The National Coalition of STD Directors has called for a minimum of \$30 million to strengthen sexual health clinics during the outbreak. “We still have no federal coordinated plan, and states and cities are largely on their own,” said David Harvey, the organization’s director.</p> <p>“I have one simple question for the administration: Where is the money, the resources, the training that is needed at the nation’s S.T.D. clinics to respond to what is already an out-of-control outbreak?”</p> <p>Public health in the United States generally is woefully underfunded and understaffed, said Janet Hamilton, executive director of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists.</p> <p>Although Covid brought more money into public health coffers, those funds cannot be used for anything else. “We cannot function at the level I think that the public needs and expects us to if we’re going to always be so categorically funded,” she said. “We’re not learning this lesson for the first time.”</p> <p>The experts did offer praise for one aspect of the administration’s response: the messaging to men who have sex with men, which hews to the “harm-reduction” approach, urging caution while recognizing people’s needs.</p> <p>Rather than “stigmatizing them for wanting to have sex and enjoy themselves, you meet them where they are,” Dr. Varma said of the C.D.C.’s monkeypox messaging. “In terms of things that have gone well, that is among the best sort of harm reduction advice I’ve seen.”</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	07/08 French telecom struggles to recover
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/french-telecom-company-la-poste-mobile-struggling-to-recover-from-ransomware-attack/
GIST	<p>French mobile phone network La Poste Mobile is still struggling to recover from a ransomware attack that has crippled its administrative and management services.</p> <p>The company’s website is down, with a lengthy message to customers explaining that the ransomware attack began on July 4. While service has not been affected, the company noted that customer data may have been accessed.</p> <p>“As soon as we became aware of this incident, we took the necessary protective measures by immediately suspending the computer systems concerned. This protective action has led us to temporarily close our website and our customer area,” the company said.</p> <p>“Our IT teams are currently diagnosing the situation. Our first analyses establish that our servers essential to the operation of your mobile line have been well protected. On the other hand, it is possible that files present in the computers of La Poste Mobile employees have been affected. Some of them may contain personal data.”</p> <p>The company urged customers to be wary of phishing messages or attempts at identity theft. Officials said customer service email addresses and phone numbers are still functioning.</p> <p>The company has more than 1.8 million customers and was founded in 2011 by French postal service group La Poste and French telecommunications company SFR. The company brought in a revenue of about \$517 million last year.</p>

	<p>La Poste Mobile is a Mobile Virtual Network Operator, which are telecommunication providers that don't own a network. It operates using SFR's network. They offer a variety of services including prepaid phone credit, mobile phone plans and conventional phone packages.</p> <p>On Friday, the LockBit ransomware group added the company to its list of victims. Two weeks ago, the ransomware gang introduced a revamped version of its tools, calling it "LockBit 3.0."</p> <p>Cybersecurity researchers have tracked a surge in LockBit activity over the last several months, and the group is poised to overtake Conti as the most prolific ransomware group in terms of publicly identified victims.</p> <p>Recent incidents attributed to the group include attacks on a Foxconn factory, a Canadian fighter jet training company, and a popular German library service.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Tech, IT workers bubble about to burst?
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/education/professional-development/as-hiring-freezes-and-layoffs-hit-is-the-bubble-about-to-burst-for-tech-workers/
GIST	<p>Tech and IT workers have been reaping the benefits of a candidate-driven jobs market in recent months, with the demand for digital talent creating a seemingly limitless number of career opportunities for seasoned software professionals.</p> <p>But brewing beneath the surface are signs that the party could be coming to an end. As business leaders brace for surging inflation and higher costs, hiring and salary freezes are likely to follow – leaving emboldened tech workers feeling markedly less buoyant, and perhaps with less options in job negotiations than they have recently become accustomed to.</p> <p>Until now, the tech industry has largely sailed through the economic turbulence that has impacted other industries. Remote working and an urgency to put everything on the cloud or in an app – significantly accelerated by the pandemic – has created fierce demand for those who can create, migrate, and secure software.</p> <p>However, tech leaders are bracing for tough times ahead. According to recent data by CW Jobs, 85% of IT decision makers expect their organization to be impacted by the cost of doing business – including hiring freezes (21%) and pay freezes (20%). We're already seeing this play out, with Tesla, Uber and Netflix amongst the big names to have announced hiring freezes or layoffs in recent weeks. Meanwhile, Microsoft, Coinbase and Meta have all put dampeners on recruiting.</p> <p>If tech workers are concerned about this ongoing tightening of belts, they aren't showing it: the same CW Jobs report found that tech professionals remain confident enough in the industry that 57% expect a pay rise in the next year.</p> <p>Hiring freezes and layoffs don't seem to have had much impact on worker mobility, either: just 24% of professionals surveyed by CW Jobs say they plan to stay in their current role for the next 12 months. This is down from 29% in 2021. Clearly, tech workers feel no pressure to hunker down for the approaching storm – a storm just 44% of IT leaders feel confident about weathering.</p> <p>This poses the question: is it time for tech workers to take a reality check? The post-pandemic jobs boom was bound to slow eventually, and it's difficult to see how tech workers will continue being able to negotiate such huge salaries when companies are looking for ways to cut costs.</p> <p>And if companies start clamping down on big bumps in salaries, what's next? Could flexible working find itself in the firing line as the tech jobs market tightens and the balance of power slips back in favour of employers?</p>

	For the time being at least, tech workers have little to worry about. Hiring activity in the industry remains strong , particularly for those with the skills that continue to prove so hard to source – cybersecurity and software development amongst the most prominent. Still, the good times can't last forever, and as business leaders move to protect their bottom lines, job-hopping tech workers will have to decide whether it's better to stick or twist.
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HEADLINE	07/08 Pro-Russians briefly DDoS Congress.gov
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/killnet-congress-ddos-russia-hackivist/
GIST	<p>A pro-Russian cybercrime group attacked the Congress.gov web domain Thursday, resulting in temporary down time that “briefly affected public access,” the Library of Congress told CyberScoop Friday.</p> <p>KillNet — a pro-Russian group that has launched a series of distributed denial-of-service attacks on targets around the world perceived as hostile to the Russian government — posted a video that included a 503 error page alongside an image of President Joe Biden.</p> <p>“They have money for weapons for the whole world, but not for their own defense,” the group wrote in a message on its Telegram channel, according to a Google translation.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the Library of Congress, which administers the domain, told CyberScoop in an email that the site suffered a DDoS “network attack that briefly affected public access,” adding that the site was “intermittently affected” starting at about 9 p.m. Thursday and returned to normal operation just after 11 p.m.</p> <p>“The Library of Congress used existing measures to address the attack quickly, resulting in minimal down time,” the spokesperson said. “The Library’s network was not compromised and no data was lost as a result of the attack.”</p> <p>KillNet is one of several pro-Russian cybercriminal groups to emerge in the wake of the Feb. 24 Russian invasion of Ukraine. In April, the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency included the group in an alert about Russian state-sponsored and criminal cyber threats to critical infrastructure as one of an array of groups that carry out actions in support of the Russian government but may also be financially motivated.</p> <p>The group attacked a small airport in Connecticut in March and has since gone after targets around the world. In the last week of June it was linked to a series of attacks in Norway, and has also incessantly attacked Lithuanian targets as that country blocked transport routes with Kaliningrad, a Russian province on the Baltic Sea bordered by Lithuania and Poland.</p> <p>A May analysis from cybersecurity firm Mandiant listed KillNet in the same category as other “hacktivist” groups, such as Kaxnet and RahDit, that carry out activities in support of Russia even as the degree of affiliation with the Russian state is unknown.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/08 New ‘HavanaCrypt’ ransomware family
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/new-havanacrypt-ransomware-distributed-fake-google-software-update
GIST	<p>Security researchers at Trend Micro have identified a new ransomware family that is being delivered as a fake Google Software Update application.</p> <p>Dubbed HavanaCrypt, the ransomware performs multiple anti-virtualization checks and uses a Microsoft web hosting service IP address for its command and control (C&C) server, which allows it to evade detection.</p>

During their [analysis of HavanaCrypt](#), Trend Micro also discovered that it uses a namespace method function that queues a method for execution and that it employs the modules of an open-source password manager during encryption.

Compiled in .NET and protected using the Obfuscator open-source obfuscator, HavanaCrypt hides its window after execution, then checks the AutoRun registry for a “GoogleUpdate” entry and continues with its routine if the registry is not found.

Next, it proceeds with its anti-virtualization routine, which consists of four stages: first, it checks for services associated with virtual machines, then for files related to virtual machine applications, then for file names used for VM executables, and then it checks the machine’s MAC address.

Should all the checks pass, the malware downloads a file named “2.txt” from a Microsoft web hosting service IP address, saves it as a .bat file, and executes it. The batch file contains instructions for Windows Defender to ignore detections in the “Windows” and “User” directories.

Next, the ransomware terminates a series of running processes, including those for database applications (Microsoft SQL Server and MySQL) and those of Microsoft Office and Steam.

Then, HavanaCrypt queries all disk drives and deletes all shadow copies, and uses Windows Management Instrumentation (WMI) to identify system restore instances and delete them.

After that, the ransomware drops executable copies of itself in the “ProgramData” and “StartUp” folders, sets them as hidden system files, and drops in the “User Startup” folder a .bat file containing a function that disables the Task Manager.

HavanaCrypt generates a unique identifier (UID) based on system information such as processor cores and ID, processor name, socket, motherboard manufacturer and name, BIOS version, and product number.

During encryption, the malware uses the CryptoRandom function of KeePass Password Safe for generating encryption keys. The threat appends the “.Havana” extension to the encrypted files, and avoids encrypting files with certain extensions or those in specific directories, including that of the Tor browser, suggesting that the malware author might plan communication over the Tor network.

The malware also creates a text file that logs all the directories containing the encrypted files. The file is named foo.txt and the ransomware encrypts it as well. No ransom note is dropped.

“This might be an indication that HavanaCrypt is still in its development phase. Nevertheless, it is important to detect and block it before it evolves further and does even more damage,” Trend Micro explains.

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HEADLINE	07/09 Mangatoon breach exposes 23M users
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/mangatoon-data-breach-exposes-data-from-23-million-accounts/
GIST	<p>Comic reading platform Mangatoon has suffered a data breach that exposed information belonging to 23 million user accounts after a hacker stole it from an unsecured Elasticsearch database.</p> <p>Mangatoon is also a very popular iOS and Android app used by millions of users to read online Manga comics.</p> <p>This week, the data breach notification service Have I Been Pwned (HIBP) added 23 million Mangatoon accounts to their platform.</p>

"Mangatoon had 23M accounts breached in May. The breach exposed names, email addresses, genders, social media account identities, auth tokens from social logins and salted MD5 password hashes," [tweeted](#) the HIBP account.

The addition of the Mangatoon database comes after HIBP's owner, Troy Hunt, attempted to contact the company about the data breach without any success.

Mangatoon users can now search for their email address on HIBP and check if their account is part of the breach.

BleepingComputer has sent multiple emails to Mangatoon regarding the data breach but has not heard back.

Stolen from an Elasticsearch database

The data breach was conducted by a well-known hacker named "pompompurin," who said they stole the database from an Elasticsearch server that was using weak credentials.

"It was ES, they had credentials on it but it was just "password", they changed the credentials after I emailed telling them but they never notified their customers and never replied," pompompurin told BleepingComputer.

pompompurin shared samples of the database with BleepingComputer, which we confirmed to be valid accounts on the Mangatoon platform.

When asked if they would publicly release or sell the database, they said they would probably leak it at some point.

pompompurin has been involved in other high-profile breaches, including sending fake cyberattack emails through the [FBI's Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal](#) (LEEP) and [stealing customer data from Robinhood](#).

After the RaidForums hacking forums [were seized by law enforcement](#), pompompurin launched a similar forum called Breached.

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HEADLINE	07/10 University earned money by paying ransom
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/maastricht-university-wound-up-earning-money-from-its-ransom-payment/
GIST	<p>Maastricht University (UM), a Dutch university with more than 22,000 students, said last week that it had recovered the ransom paid after a ransomware attack that hit its network in December 2019.</p> <p>After a thorough investigation of the incident, the attack was linked by cybersecurity company Fox-IT with a financially motivated hacker group tracked as TA505 (or SectorJ04), known for primarily targeting retail and financial organizations since at least Q3 2014.</p> <p>The hackers infiltrated the university's systems via phishing e-mails in mid-October and deployed Clop ransomware payloads on 267 Windows systems on December 23, after moving laterally through the network.</p> <p>One week later, on December 30, the university decided to pay the ransom to have its files decrypted after deciding that rebuilding all infected systems from scratch or creating a decryptor were not viable options.</p> <p>UM said at the time that it paid a 30 bitcoin ransom (roughly €200,000 at the time) for the ransomware decryptor, which allowed the university to avoid delaying exams and losing all the research, educational, and staff data, as well as info on salary payments for approximately 4,500 employees.</p>

"It is a decision that was not taken lightly by the Executive Board. But it was also a decision that had to be made," UM [explained](#).

"We felt, in consultation with our management and our supervisory bodies, that we could not make any other responsible choice when considering the interests of our students and staff.

Ransom bitcoins' value has doubled since 2019

However, as UM recently revealed, in a "remarkable development," the Netherlands Public Prosecution Service traced and seized a wallet containing the cryptocurrency paid by the university as ransom in 2019. "The investigation [...] eventually paved the way for the seizure of the cryptocurrency by the Dutch Public Prosecution Service. As early as February 2020, the investigation team froze a so-called wallet containing part of the paid ransom," UM [said](#).

"The value of the cryptocurrencies found at that time was €40,000; at the current exchange rate, they are worth approximately €500,000."

Although this might seem like the university made a considerable profit within a relatively short time, the €500,000 seized by law enforcement agents represents significantly less than the damage inflicted during the ransomware attack.

These seized funds are now in a bank account under the control of the Netherlands' Public Prosecution Service, and the Ministry of Justice has already initiated legal proceedings to transfer them to UM.

After recovering the money, UM Executive Board said it wants to create a fund that would allow the university to help students in need.

"The cyber attack showed how vulnerable students can be in their study progress, but certainly also financially," explains Vice-President Bos.

"The crises we have experienced since then have only further underlined this vulnerability. In light of this, the Executive Board considers the use of these funds to help students in need very appropriate."

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HEADLINE	07/08 Callback malware, impersonation campaign
SOURCE	https://www.crowdstrike.com/blog/callback-malware-campaigns-impersonate-crowdstrike-and-other-cybersecurity-companies/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>On July 8, 2022, CrowdStrike Intelligence identified a callback phishing campaign impersonating prominent cybersecurity companies, including CrowdStrike. The phishing email implies the recipient's company has been breached and insists the victim call the included phone number. This campaign leverages similar social-engineering tactics to those employed in recent callback campaigns including WIZARD SPIDER's 2021 BazarCall campaign.</p> <p>This campaign will highly likely include common legitimate remote administration tools (RATs) for initial access, off-the-shelf penetration testing tools for lateral movement, and the deployment of ransomware or data extortion.</p> <p>Details</p> <p>The callback campaign employs emails that appear to originate from prominent security companies; the message claims the security company identified a potential compromise in the recipient's network. As with prior callback campaigns, the operators provide a phone number for the recipient to call...</p> <p>Historically, callback campaign operators attempt to persuade victims to install commercial RAT software to gain an initial foothold on the network. For example, CrowdStrike Intelligence identified a similar callback campaign in March 2022 in which threat actors installed AteraRMM followed by Cobalt Strike to assist with lateral movement and deploy additional malware.</p>

	While CrowdStrike Intelligence cannot currently confirm the variant in use, the callback operators will likely use ransomware to monetize their operation. This assessment is made with moderate confidence, as 2021 BazarCall campaigns would eventually lead to Conti ransomware — though this ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) recently ceased operations. This is the first identified callback campaign impersonating cybersecurity entities and has higher potential success given the urgent nature of cyber breaches.
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HEADLINE	07/08 New Omega behind double-extortion attacks
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-0mega-ransomware-targets-businesses-in-double-extortion-attacks/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>A new ransomware operation named ‘Omega’ targets organizations worldwide in double-extortion attacks and demands millions of dollars in ransoms.</p> <p>Omega (spelled with a zero) is a new ransomware operation launched in May 2022 and has attacked numerous victims since then.</p> <p>What we know about Omega</p> <p>A ransomware sample for the Omega operation hasn’t yet been found, therefore there’s not much information on how files are encrypted.</p> <p>However, we do know that the ransomware appends the .0mega extension to the encrypted file’s names and creates ransom notes named DECRYPT-FILES.txt.</p> <p>These ransom notes are customized per victim, usually containing the company name and describing the different types of data stolen in attacks. In addition, some notes include threats on how the Omega gang will disclose the attack to business partners and trade associations if a ransom is not paid.</p> <p>These ransom notes include a link to a Tor payment negotiation site with a "support" chat that victims can use to contact the ransomware gang.</p> <p>To log in to this site, victims must upload their ransom notes that include a unique Base64-encoded blob used by the site to identify the victim.</p> <p>Dedicated Omega data leak site</p> <p>Like almost all enterprise-targeting ransomware operations, Omega runs a dedicated data leak site that the threat actors use to publish stolen data if a ransom is not paid.</p> <p>Omega’s leak site is currently hosting 152 GB of data stolen from an electronics repair company in a May attack.</p> <p>However, last week there was an additional victim that has since been removed, indicating that the company may have paid a ransom.</p> <p>As this is a relatively new operation, we will likely see more attacks in the future, and it is one we need to keep an eye on.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/08 Phishing fake job offer behind \$600M hack
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/fake-job-offer-behind-axie/?&web_view=true
GIST	A fake LinkedIn job offer was the reason behind Axie Infinity’s \$600m hack , according to a new investigation by The Block.

The digital assets-focused outlet said on Wednesday that while the US government [attributed the attack](#) to the North Korean hacker group Lazarus, full details of how the exploit was executed had not been disclosed.

The Block [said](#) that according to two unnamed people with direct knowledge of the matter, a senior engineer at Axie Infinity named Sky Mavis was tricked into applying for a job at a non-existent company.

Mavis would have been approached by people via LinkedIn encouraging her to apply for the job, and after passing multiple interviews, she was offered a job with “an extremely generous compensation package.”

The message with the fake offer, however, contained a PDF that, once opened, would have delivered spyware that infected Ronin, the Ethereum-linked sidechain upon which Axie Infinity was based.

The malware would have then enabled hackers to attack and take over four out of nine validators on the Ronin network.

“This is a perfect example of the risks of file-based threats and how easy it is for hackers to infiltrate your systems through documents shared both externally and internally,” Glasswall CEO Danny Lopez told *Infosecurity Magazine*.

“You can never be too careful – no matter how legitimate something looks on the surface, it can harbor malicious code,” Lopez added.

According to the security expert, taking a proactive approach to cybersecurity is far more efficient and cost-effective than relying on a reactive approach.

“Content Disarm and Reconstruction (CDR) technology is an example of a proactive approach that provides immediate protection as a threat enters the IT environment,” Lopez explained.

“All files undergo an instant, four-step process to ensure that every document is completely safe by removing any potentially malicious code.”

Lopez called CDR a simple, proactive solution and said it is particularly valuable because it helps to create a digital environment where a threat cannot exist.

“This means that users can trust every document that enters or leaves an organization. What’s more, CDR achieves this quickly, allowing operations to continue as usual without sacrificing productivity or security.”

The Sky Mavis news comes weeks after the US Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) [sanctioned cryptocurrency mixing service Blender.io](#) after it was allegedly used by North Korean hackers in the Ronin hack.

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HEADLINE	07/10 Defense firm: US spies backed Pegasus bid
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/10/us/politics/defense-firm-said-us-spies-backed-its-bid-for-pegasus-spyware-maker.html
GIST	<p>A team of executives from an American military contractor quietly visited Israel numerous times in recent months to try to carry out a bold but risky plan: purchasing NSO Group, the cyber hacking firm that is as notorious as it is technologically accomplished.</p> <p>The impediments were substantial for the team from the American company, L3Harris, which also had experience with spyware technology. They started with the uncomfortable fact that the United States government had put NSO on a blacklist just months earlier because the Israeli firm’s spyware, called</p>

Pegasus, had been used by other governments to penetrate the phones of political leaders, human rights activists and journalists.

Pegasus is a “zero-click” hacking tool that can remotely extract everything from a target’s mobile phone, including messages, contacts, photos and videos without the user having to click on a phishing link to give it remote access. It can also turn the mobile phone into a tracking and recording device.

NSO had acted “contrary to the national security or foreign policy interests of the United States,” the Biden administration said in announcing the blacklisting in November, barring American companies from doing any business with the Israeli firm.

But five people familiar with the negotiations said that the L3Harris team had brought with them a surprising message that made a deal seem possible. American intelligence officials, they said, quietly supported its plans to purchase NSO, whose technology over the years has been of intense interest to many intelligence and law enforcement agencies around the world, including the F.B.I. and the C.I.A.

The talks continued in secret until last month, when [word of NSO’s possible sale leaked](#) and sent all the parties scrambling. White House officials said they were outraged to learn about the negotiations, and that any attempt by American defense firms to purchase a blacklisted company would be met by serious resistance.

Days later, L3Harris, which is heavily reliant on government contracts, notified the Biden administration that it had scuttled its plans to purchase NSO, according to three United States government officials, although several people familiar with the talks said there have been attempts to resuscitate the negotiations.

Left in place are questions in Washington, other allied capitals and Jerusalem about whether parts of the U.S. government — with or without the knowledge of the White House — had seized an opportunity to try to bring control of NSO’s powerful spyware under U.S. authority, despite the administration’s very public stance against the Israeli firm.

It also left unsettled the fate of NSO, whose technology has been a tool of Israeli foreign policy even as the firm has become a target of intense criticism for the ways its spyware is used by governments against their citizens.

The episode was the latest skirmish in an ongoing battle among nations to gain control of some of the world’s most powerful cyberweapons, and it reveals some of the headwinds faced by a coalition of nations — including the United States under the Biden administration — as it tries to rein in a lucrative global market for sophisticated commercial spyware.

Spokesmen for L3Harris and NSO declined to comment about the negotiations between the companies. A spokeswoman for Avril Haines, the director of national intelligence, declined to comment on whether any American intelligence officials quietly blessed the discussions. A spokesman for the Commerce Department declined to give specifics about any discussions with L3 Harris about purchasing NSO.

A spokesman for the Israeli defense ministry declined to comment, as did a spokeswoman for the Israeli prime minister.

The Biden administration’s decision to put NSO on a Commerce Department blacklist came after years of revelations about how governments had used Pegasus, NSO’s premier hacking tool, as an instrument of domestic surveillance. But the United States itself has also purchased, tested and deployed Pegasus.

In January, The New York Times [revealed](#) that the F.B.I. had purchased Pegasus software in 2019, and that government lawyers at the F.B.I. and the Justice Department had debated whether to deploy the spyware for use in domestic law enforcement investigations. The Times also reported that in 2018 the

C.I.A. had purchased Pegasus for the government of Djibouti to conduct counterterrorism operations, despite that country's record of torturing political opposition figures and imprisoning journalists.

A decision by L3 to terminate the acquisition talks would leave NSO's future in doubt. The company had seen a deal with the American defense contractor as a potential lifeline after being blacklisted by the Commerce Department, which has crippled its business. American firms are not allowed to do business with companies on the blacklist, under penalty of sanctions.

As a result, NSO cannot buy any American technology to sustain its operations — whether it be Dell servers or Amazon cloud storage — and the Israeli firm has been hoping that being sold to a company in the United States could lead to the sanctions being lifted.

For more than a decade, Israel has treated NSO as a de facto arm of the state, granting licenses for Pegasus to numerous countries — including Saudi Arabia, Hungary and India — with which the Israeli government hoped to nurture stronger security and diplomatic ties.

But Israel has also denied Pegasus to countries for reasons of diplomacy. Last year, Israel [rejected a request by the government of Ukraine](#) to purchase Pegasus to use against targets in Russia, fearing that the sale would damage Israel's relations with the Kremlin.

The Israeli government also makes extensive use of Pegasus and other locally made cyber tools for its own intelligence and law enforcement purposes, giving it further incentive to find a way for NSO to survive the American sanctions.

During the discussions about the possible sale of NSO to L3 Harris — which included at least one meeting with Amir Eshel, the director general of the Israeli defense ministry, who would have to approve any deal — the L3Harris representatives said they had received permission from the United States government to negotiate with NSO, despite the company's presence on the American blacklist.

L3 Harris's representatives told the Israelis that U.S. intelligence agencies supported the acquisition as long as certain conditions were met, according to five people familiar with the discussions.

One of the conditions, those people said, was that NSO's arsenal of “zero days” — the vulnerabilities in computer source code that allow Pegasus to hack into mobile phones — could be sold to all of the United States' partners in the so-called Five Eyes intelligence sharing relationship. The other partners are Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. A senior British diplomat declined to comment on questions about the degree of knowledge British intelligence had about a possible deal between L3 and NSO.

Such a plan would have been highly unusual had it been finalized, since the Five Eyes countries usually only purchase intelligence products that have been developed and manufactured within those countries.

Israeli defense ministry officials were open to this arrangement. But following heavy pressure from the Israeli intelligence community, it balked at another request: that the Israeli government allow NSO to share the computer source code for Pegasus — which allows it to exploit the vulnerabilities in the phones it targets — with the Five Eyes countries. They also did not agree, at least not in the first phase, to allow L3's cyber experts to come to Israel and join NSO's development teams at the company's headquarters north of Tel Aviv.

Representatives of the defense ministry also insisted that Israel retain its authority to grant export licenses for NSO's products, but said they were willing to negotiate over which countries received the spyware.

Over the course of the discussions, there were numerous issues that would have required the approval of the United States government. L3Harris representatives said that they had discussed the issues with American officials, who had agreed in principle, according to the people familiar with the discussions.

To help negotiate the sale of NSO, L3Harris hired an influential lawyer in Israel with deep ties to Israel's defense establishment. The lawyer, Daniel Reisner, is the former head of the International Law Department at the Israeli Military Prosecutor's Office and acted as a special adviser on the Middle East peace process to former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In the months since the Biden administration announced the blacklist in November, and as the Israeli government pressed for a way to keep NSO from going under, the Commerce Department in Washington sent a list of questions to NSO and another Israeli hacking firm that had been blacklisted at the same time, about how the spyware works, who it targets and whether the company has any control over how its nation-state clients deploy the hacking tools.

The list, reviewed by The Times, asked whether NSO maintained "positive control over its products" and whether Americans overseas were protected from having NSO's products deployed against them.

Another asked if NSO would "shut down access to its products if the U.S. government informs them that there is an unacceptable risk of the tool being used for human rights abuses by a particular customer?"

Separately from the proposed NSO and L3 Harris deal, Israeli officials negotiated unsuccessfully with the Commerce Department about getting NSO removed from the American blacklist in advance of President Biden's trip to Israel in the coming week.

News last month of L3Harris's talks to purchase NSO seemed to blindside White House officials. After the website [Intelligence Online](#) reported on the possible sale, a top White House official said such a transaction would pose "serious counterintelligence and security concerns for the U.S. government" and that the administration would work to ensure that the deal did not happen.

The official said that an American company, particularly a defense contractor, should have been aware that any transaction "would spur intensive review to examine whether the transaction process poses a counterintelligence threat to the U.S., government and its systems and information."

Last week, in response to questions from The Times, another U.S. official said that no part of the American government blessed L3's purchase of NSO, and that "after learning about the potential sale, the IC did an analysis that raised concerns about the sale's implications and informed the administration's position."

While not a household defense industry name like Lockheed Martin or Raytheon, L3Harris earns billions each year from American government contracts at both the federal and state level. According to the company's [most recent](#) annual report, more than 70 percent of the company's revenue in fiscal year 2021 came from various U.S. government contracts.

[USAspending.gov](#), a website that tracks government contracts, indicates that the Defense Department is L3Harris' biggest government client.

The company once produced a surveillance system called [Stingray](#) that was used by the F.B.I. and local American police forces until the company discontinued production. In 2018, the company purchased [Azimuth](#) Security and Linchpin Labs, two Australian cyber firms that Vice [reported](#) had sold zero day exploits to the Five Eyes countries.

In 2016, the F.B.I. enlisted Azimuth to help break into the Apple phone of a terrorist who had carried out a deadly shooting in San Bernardino, Calif., killing more than a dozen people, according to a [report](#) in the Washington Post.

Azimuth's work for the F.B.I. ended a standoff between the bureau and Apple, which had pointedly refused to help the F.B.I. unlock the phone in the San Bernardino case. The tech giant argued it had no backdoor to allow the F.B.I. access to the phone, and were loath to create one because it would weaken the iPhone's security features it promotes to its customers.

HEADLINE	07/10 Crypto plunge: caution for public pensions
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/cryptocurrency-technology-blockchain-government-and-politics-bb0b28c277f078dc34d5bf90e36f91f7
GIST	<p>MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — When the Houston Firefighters Relief and Retirement Fund bought \$25 million in cryptocurrencies, with the fund’s chief investment officer touting their potential, retired fire Capt. Russell Harris was concerned.</p> <p>Harris, 62, has attended the funerals of 34 firefighters killed in the line of duty. He was already worried about his pension after an overhaul by state and city officials cut payments as they grappled with the ability to pay out benefits. He didn’t see crypto, unproven in his eyes, as an answer.</p> <p>“I don’t like it,” Harris said. “There’s too many pyramid schemes that everybody gets wrapped up in. That’s the way I see this cryptocurrency at this time. ... There might be a place for it, but it’s still new and nobody understands it.”</p> <p>The plunge in prices for Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies in recent weeks provides a cautionary tale for the handful of public pension funds that have dipped their toes in the crypto pool over the past few years. Most have done it indirectly through stocks or investment funds that serve as proxies for the larger crypto market. A lack of transparency makes it difficult to tell whether they’ve made or lost money, let alone how much, and for the most part fund officials won’t say.</p> <p>But the recent crypto meltdown has prompted a larger question: For pension funds that ensure teachers, firefighters, police and other public workers receive guaranteed benefits in retirement after public service, is any amount of crypto investment too risky?</p> <p>Many public pension funds across the U.S. are underfunded, sometimes seriously so, which leads them to take risks to try to catch up. That doesn’t always work out, and the risk extends not just to the funds but to taxpayers who might have to bail them out, either through higher taxes or diverting spending away from other needs.</p> <p>Keith Brainard, research director for the National Association of State Retirement Administrators, said he wasn’t aware of more than a handful of public pension funds that have invested in crypto.</p> <p>“There may come a day when crypto settles down and becomes adequately understood and mature as a potential investment that public pension funds might embrace them,” Brainard said. “I’m just not sure that we’re there yet.”</p> <p>The U.S. Department of Labor urges “extreme care” in crypto investments because of the high risks. The recent plunge in crypto prices has caused Washington to more closely scrutinize the freewheeling industry. After the collapse of \$40 billion crypto asset known as Terra, senators in both parties have proposed legislation that would regulate crypto for the first time, and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has called for more oversight of crypto ventures.</p> <p>The Houston Firefighters Relief and Retirement Fund’s cryptocurrency investment wasn’t very big — just \$15 million in what was then a \$5.5 billion portfolio.</p> <p>It’s not clear how that panned out in the cryptocurrency market slide this year. Officials from fund and the union didn’t respond to multiple requests for comment. But the fund bought in when bitcoin prices were close to their peak of nearly \$67,000, and they’ve been on the decline since then, dipping below \$20,000 in June.</p> <p>The fund’s chairman, Brett Besselman, said in a first-quarter report that it was healthy with an overall rate of return of 33.7% in 2021. Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said earlier this year that the 2017 overhaul</p>

is working well and, thanks to strong returns in 2021, has put his city's pension funds well ahead of schedule toward eliminating their unfunded liabilities.

Houston's experiment, which fund managers touted as the first announced direct purchase of digital assets by a U.S. pension plan, followed a series of bigger but indirect investments by two pension funds for Fairfax County of Virginia. They put over \$120 million into funds that seek opportunities in the crypto world, such as blockchain technology, digital tokens and cryptocurrency derivatives. As in Houston, the Virginia investments are a tiny share of the funds' \$7.2 billion in assets.

Since 2018, the Fairfax County Employees' Retirement System and Fairfax County Police Officers Retirement System have put money into venture capital funds that invest in blockchain and a hedge fund that seeks to harness some of the volatility inherent in the space, said Jeffrey Weiler, executive director of Fairfax County Retirement Systems. He said the goal was to invest in infrastructure that underlies blockchain technology, which managers continue to view as a high-growth area.

Crypto-related investments aren't necessarily deliberate. The Minnesota State Board of Investment manages a portfolio worth around \$130 billion for several public employee pension plans and other entities. A recent report shows it held small stakes as of Dec. 31 in the [crypto exchange Coinbase Global](#) and the bitcoin miners Riot Blockchain and Marathon Digital Holdings with a combined market value of \$5.3 million. It also listed two holdings of fixed-income securities from Coinbase with a market value of \$2.2 million.

Mansco Perry, the board's executive director and chief investment officer, said the board invests heavily in stock indexes, so those holdings were most likely in one of its index funds or were purchased by an outside investment manager.

"We don't own cryptocurrency, but if a company is big enough to be in an index, more than likely we own it," Perry said.

The Minnesota board may look at crypto-related investments someday just to learn about them, Perry said, "but it's not a high priority. ... I would say we're nowhere close to making an investment decision to move forward, but that doesn't mean we never will."

The country's largest public pension fund, the [California Public Employees' Retirement System](#), known as CalPERS, took a tiny stake in 2017 in Riot Blockchain that grew to over \$1.9 million by late 2020. Securities and Exchange Commission filings show it reached \$5.4 million before CalPERS got out sometime in the second quarter of 2021. Officials declined to give details, but it was a miniscule play in CalPERS' total portfolio of well over \$400 billion.

According to SEC filings, the State of Wisconsin Investment Board apparently began testing the waters early last year with purchases of Coinbase, Marathon and Riot Blockchain. Those holdings grew to at least \$19.3 million, against a total portfolio of \$48.2 billion, by the end of the first quarter this year. Board officials did not respond to requests for comment.

New Jersey's main state pension fund appears from SEC filings to have started investing in some crypto-related stocks in the second quarter of 2021. As of the end of March 2022, the state had about \$9.5 million in combined holdings in Coinbase, Riot Blockchain and Marathon. New Jersey state treasury officials said they don't comment on specific investments.

Other public funds that have taken smaller stakes include the Utah Retirement Systems, which once held a \$13.2 million stake in Coinbase but doesn't anymore. The Pennsylvania Public School Employees' Retirement System held as much as \$2.6 million worth of Coinbase last summer but was down to \$681,000 by the end of the first quarter, after selling most of its stake, while adding about \$398,000 worth of Marathon starting in the second half of 2021.

	<p>Harris, the retired Houston fire captain, said he sees his pension as a contract that should be honored, given the risks that firefighters routinely take. While he's generally happy with how his pension fund has performed, he's still uneasy about crypto. He also points out that firefighters in Houston and many other U.S. communities generally aren't eligible for Social Security.</p> <p>"There's just a lot of people out there, if they lose that pension it's over," Harris said. "Some of these older retirees, I just do not know how they're surviving."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Election officials confront cyber threats
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/election-officials-confront-cyber-threats-false-claims-ahead-of-midterms-11657454400?mod=lead&feature=below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>BATON ROUGE, La.—Election officials on the front lines of defending voting systems say they are preparing for a range of challenges ahead of the fall midterms, as they seek to ward off cyber threats and restore voter confidence after a flood of unsubstantiated election-fraud claims.</p> <p>On the cybersecurity front, Russia, China, Iran and North Korea pose persistent threats along with other concerns including ransomware, said Jen Easterly, director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency—the U.S. government's top cyber unit.</p> <p>Federal and state officials said they aren't only guarding against cyber threats, but also protecting physical access to voting systems.</p> <p>"We're in a mode of constant vigilance," said Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose, a Republican, whose office in late June issued a third round of cyber- and physical-security requirements, including camera surveillance of election equipment, for the state's county election boards.</p> <p>The nation's secretaries of state, who typically oversee state election systems, met with Ms. Easterly and other federal cybersecurity officials over the past few days at a hotel in Baton Rouge, as part of their annual bipartisan summer gathering.</p> <p>The 2020 election season saw a flood of unsubstantiated election-fraud claims pushed by former President Donald Trump and his allies as they disputed Democrat Joe Biden's 2020 presidential victory. Audits and state investigations didn't find evidence of problems that could have altered the presidential outcome.</p> <p>Election officials around the country have turned to social-media campaigns, tours of election offices and additional audits to counter false election-rigging claims.</p> <p>While it isn't new for supporters of a losing candidate from either party to question results, polls show widening divisions. In 2020, 22% of Republicans were confident that ballots were counted accurately nationwide, compared with 93% of Democrats, according to a survey by Massachusetts Institute of Technology researchers. That was a bigger gap than in 2016, when 80% of Republicans were confident in the results showing Mr. Trump's win, compared with 69% of Democrats.</p> <p>Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, a Democrat, said she is pushing for more resources to address the deluge of violent threats election officials received around the country for certifying Mr. Biden's election win. She suggested federal legislation to help election officials shield their personal information from being publicized online and more funding for election offices to bolster security.</p> <p>"All of these threats to democracy are feeding into threats and harassment against election workers," said Ms. Benson, who has said she received threats after Mr. Biden won Michigan in 2020 by roughly 154,000 votes.</p>

In Colorado, Secretary of State Jena Griswold, a Democrat, dealt with an unusual situation involving an election official accused of aiding a voting-machine security breach that led to images of Mesa County’s voting equipment and passwords being shared online. Earlier this year, Mesa County Clerk Tina Peters was [indicted on a number of charges](#) related to the incident.

State officials accused Ms. Peters of aiding what they called an effort to support unfounded conspiracy theories. Ms. Peters has criticized the accusations as politically motivated and denied wrongdoing.

Colorado recently passed legislation to increase safeguards against what Ms. Griswold described as insider threats. The legislation requires continuous video surveillance of voting systems and creates a felony for tampering with voting equipment, among other measures.

The federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency has issued guidance on how election offices can mitigate insider threats, such as by using tamper-evident seals, tracking who accesses computers, and using two-person teams for sensitive tasks.

“The vast majority of county clerks in the state of Colorado—election workers across this country, Republicans and Democrats—do a fantastic job,” Ms. Griswold said. “But we are seeing some limited numbers embrace these conspiracies.”

In Georgia, Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger fended off a [Trump-backed primary challenger](#), U.S. Rep. Jody Hice, who had questioned the 2020 election results. Mr. Trump turned against Mr. Raffensperger after the secretary of state [refused to overturn the 2020 state results](#) showing Mr. Biden won Georgia by nearly 12,000 votes, as confirmed by two statewide recounts.

“Even though just about everything that was said after the 2020 election—all of the allegations—none of it ever proved out, what it did do is it did damage confidence,” said Mr. Raffensperger, who [will face the Democratic nominee](#), Bee Nguyen, in November.

Mr. Raffensperger praised [a new voting-security law](#) Georgia passed last year, saying it strikes a balance between accessibility and security and would improve voter confidence. The law requires voters requesting an absentee ballot to provide a driver’s license number or another form of identification, and approved a limited number of drop boxes, among other changes.

Georgia saw [high early-voting turnout](#) for the state’s May primary, prompting Republicans to applaud the state’s voting law. Democrats have fiercely criticized the law, saying the new requirements [make it harder to vote](#), especially for minorities. Many of them attributed the turnout to voter-education efforts they said helped voters master the new requirements.

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HEADLINE	07/10 TikTok ‘frog army’ bizarre stunt
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/jul/10/tiktok-frog-army-stunt
GIST	<p>A TikTok “frog army” has racked up millions of likes – but the potential consequences of the bizarre stunt are no joke, experts say.</p> <p>In February of this year, a young TikTok user who claims to be based in the UK started building out a “frog army” after noticing “some type of eggs in a shallow pond near his home”. In recent videos, he claimed to have gathered more than 1.4m eggs that have hatched into tadpoles in a backyard pool he built. “I wanted to create the largest frog army in history,” he said in one video. “Next year I will create a giant pond for 10 million frogs.”</p> <p>Also this spring, another TikTok user claimed to have released 100 million ladybugs in Central Park in New York City. In later posts, he claimed he had been served a lawsuit in response and had fled the US.</p>

Racking up hundreds of millions of views as commenters egged them on, both users have continued to escalate their stunts, promising more releases of larger numbers of animals. They've even hinted at meeting up.

While the Guardian could not independently confirm the veracity of both users' accounts – neither responded to multiple requests for comments and there has been speculation the videos may be a hoax – the massive popularity of the videos has scientists concerned.

The “frog army” leader” now has more than 2 million followers and over 20m cumulative likes across his page. The “lady bug raid” conductor has more than 42m views on his videos.

“It makes me cringe,” said Tierra Curry, a conservation biologist at the Center for Biological Diversity. Relocating species like frogs and butterflies can have grave impacts, Curry said. “Instead of helping, [These TikTok users] are actually hurting the animals they're releasing and all the animals in the environment that they're releasing them into – it's creating a vector for disease and invasive species,” she said.

Scientists say if true, the frog release is alarming given that human relocation of frogs is [a top threat](#) to the species. One fungus introduced by humans redistributing amphibians [has caused](#) a “mass extinction” event, wiping out more than 90 species of frogs.

“It's the law of unintended consequences,” said Chris Nagano, who worked 27 years as an endangered species biologist at the US Fish and Wildlife Service. “I have no doubt this person may have thought he was doing a good thing, but he may actually be driving these populations to extinction.”

Experts are concerned that the way TikTok operates is exacerbating the problem.

TikTok differs from platforms like Instagram and Twitter in that its feed is made up largely of people a user does not follow, allowing content from across the web to be surfaced by the algorithms. Because the way its feed works remains relatively unknown, users are more likely to post increasingly “unexpected” content to boost their views, said Ioana Literat, an associate professor at the teachers college of Columbia University.

“Because it is such a black box, a lot of users are just throwing things at the wall to see what sticks,” she said. “More so than well-established platforms, the ethos of the TikTok really amplifies the unusual and creative.”

When videos do go viral, the platforms' 1 billion monthly active user base guarantees an extremely wide reach. The app's popularity has created an evolving business model in which creators are shifting from “persona-based fame” to “content-based” fame, said Literat.

“People no longer need to build a following over time, they just need to do one wacky or unexpected thing that goes viral and the followers will come later,” she said.

In both the frog and ladybug cases, the users were in conversation with, and encouraged by, their followers.

Frog army followers commented on the user's videos asking how they can collect their own eggs. And the user behind the ladybug release claimed to have explicitly launched his stunt in exchange for engagement saying, “if this video gets 30 likes I will buy 100 million lady bugs and do a lady bug invasion in NYC.”

“They are doing this to get likes or shares,” said Curry, the conservation biologist. “It's a popularity stunt that can have extremely negative consequences.”

She noted such releases could also be illegal. Laws vary by country and state, Curry said, but she encouraged people to call their state wildlife agency if they see such activity on TikTok.

	TikTok did not immediately respond to a request for comment.
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HEADLINE	07/09 Elon Musk moves to abandon Twitter deal
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/07/09/twitter-elon-musk-deal/
GIST	<p>Elon Musk’s attempt to terminate his Twitter acquisition will likely force the social network into a protracted legal battle and send its stock price diving — thrusting a new level of chaos upon the firm after months of public disputes have battered its reputation and employee morale.</p> <p>In short? “This was worst case scenario for Twitter, and now it’s happened,” said Dan Ives, the managing director and senior equity research analyst covering the tech sector at Wedbush Securities.</p> <p>Ives warned that Musk’s bid to walk away may make the company appear to be “damaged goods” in the eyes of other investors or potential acquirers. Twitter shares were down nearly 6 percent in after hours trading on Friday. Wedbush Securities projects the stock could sink to between \$25 and \$30 when the market reopens Monday, down more than 30 percent from where it closed Friday afternoon before Musk’s filing.</p> <p>In a Friday evening news release, Twitter’s board threatened to “pursue legal action” to enforce the terms of the \$44 billion deal Musk struck in April to buy the social network and take it private. He is required to go through with the purchase, barring a major change to the business, which legal experts say is difficult to prove.</p> <p>Twitter’s board said that it was confident the company would prevail in court, but analysts warn — and employees fear — that Musk’s letter sets the stage for a turbulent period, which could carry new financial risks for the company and its workers.</p> <p>The billionaire has been threatening to pull back from the deal for weeks, but Friday’s filing opens a new front in the takeover of the social network, which wields outsize influence over news coverage and politics. Musk’s lawyers have repeatedly accused Twitter of failing to turn over data to help his team confirm the number of bots or spam accounts on the social network, setting a stage for a legal battle. Meanwhile, the company maintains it has complied with all of the terms of its agreement and has turned over its “firehose.” a massive stream of data comprising more than 500 million tweets posted everyday. Legal experts say Musk’s case doesn’t meet a threshold to allow him to walk away from the deal.</p> <p>Even if Twitter does prevail in recovering the deal or recouping a \$1 billion breakup fee, a court battle invites new challenges. Twitter could be forced to make key business metrics public, inviting questions from Wall Street about the overall health of the company, which turned its first profit in 2018 amid a major financial retooling.</p> <p>Donna Hitscherich, a Columbia Business School professor, said Musk’s filing will naturally raise questions about why he lost interest.</p> <p>“Is he a material kind of guy who just changed his mind?” she said. “Or is there something really there to what he said might be issues with the fundamental nature of the business?”</p> <p>After weeks of threats, employees have largely been bracing themselves for Musk to formally attempt to walk. “This has been the direction of travel for a while,” said one employee, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to candidly discuss the situation within the company. “There’s been a general lack of belief that the deal would go through as signed.”</p> <p>But its arrival only exasperated many workers, who say negotiations with Musk have brought intense scrutiny to Twitter. Any stock downturn would affect employee compensation, adding to the dismay of workers who have largely bristled at the prospect of the world’s richest man taking over their company.</p>

Since Musk announced his takeover, Twitter has instituted a [hiring freeze](#) and has replaced key executives. Twitter generally has a culture of transparency and open communication, the employee said, but because of the sensitivities around the deal, more information has been on lockdown. Those tensions could worsen if the deal goes to court.

That employee said their reaction to the twists and turns could be summed up most succinctly with a clown emoji.

Another employee, who previously supported the bid, described the situation as “totally depressing.”

“Musk is destroying Twitter,” said the person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity for the same reasons. “The best result for shareholders will be closing the deal at \$54.20, even with a hostile owner.”

Musk began complaining about the bot issue soon after he agreed to purchase and take the company private this spring. In a May tweet, he said the deal was “on hold” and insisted the purchase could not “move forward” until Twitter provided further proof of its methods for detecting spam.

Musk committed to using more than \$33 billion of his own wealth, which largely comes from his ownership of Tesla, to complete the deal. But as the stock market has been roiled by a global sell-off of tech stocks, Tesla share values have plummeted. Twitter’s stock has dropped 30 percent since Musk made his acquisition announcement, when it traded at \$52.

Anticipating more scrutiny of the role of bots in the deal, Twitter gave a Thursday background briefing to reporters. The core of the presentation was about how Twitter calculates its estimate that unwanted bots make up less than 5 percent of what it terms monetizable average daily users, those which the company feels comfortable charging advertisers to reach.

Twitter does not ban all bots, which include purposeful automated accounts, such as those that post other pictures on the hour or the temperature in a specific location. Instead, the company is looking for indicators that include mass creation accounts or coordination among humans to artificially amplify a tweet, set of tweets or topic.

The company stressed that the fire hose is not enough to understand the state of bots on the platform. Twitter alone can see all the private data, including the phone numbers or email addresses used to register accounts, which would corroborate whether an account is fake. Other critical information includes the IP address and the software configurations of the device using each account, which can pinpoint a single machine behind multiple personas.

Such statements appeared aimed at heading off declarations by Musk that of the fire hose of tweets he has received, a large percentage seemed automated or coordinated. Indeed, Musk’s Friday night termination notice claimed that Twitter had not provided him enough data about how it samples the user base.

Twitter’s experts acknowledged that individual user might feel that much more than 5 percent of their feed is unwanted content. That is, in part, because the company is measuring and disclosing problematic accounts, not their activity or impressions — so a small number of accounts might have a large footprint of views, especially among spam-heavy topics like crypto. Many others have questioned Twitter’s estimate in the past, including numerous academics.

Politicians and advocacy groups are closely scrutinizing disputes between Musk and the company, because they recognize the deal’s outcome could have broad implications on the future of elections and political discourse.

Musk has said he would [reverse the company’s ban](#) on former president Donald Trump, which Twitter instituted shortly after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, citing the “risk of further incitement of violence.” Musk’s plans have been celebrated by conservatives, who accuse the company of censoring

political speech, and impugned by liberals, who say his self-proclaimed free-speech absolutist positions could allow harassment and misinformation to run rampant on the platform.

A left-leaning watchdog group said Musk's filing highlights why the deal has been fraught from the start. "While the fallout from Musk's latest move still unfolds, one thing is clear: this chaotic crusade is nothing short of a five-alarm fire drill," said Accountable Tech Executive Director Nicole Gill in a statement. "Our information ecosystem, safety, and democracy cannot remain at the whim of unaccountable billionaires — whether it's Elon Musk or anyone else."

Meanwhile, conservatives said the blowup supported their growing push to regulate content moderation of social media at both the state and national level. "The richest man in the world couldn't even pull this off," said Kara Frederick, the director of the Tech Policy Center at the conservative Heritage Foundation, in a Fox News interview Friday night. "It's time to start talking about policy solutions."

One of the Twitter employees said there have been discussions within the company about conservatives' concerns with the platform, which employees are working to address, regardless of the outcome of the sale.

Still, the public debacle is unlikely to settle down.

"It was a political firestorm that Musk inserted himself into, and now there's going to be many twists and turns again," Ives said. "You can't put the genie back in the bottle."

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HEADLINE	07/08 Canada massive mobile, internet outage
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/canada-outage-leaves-mobile-internet-service-86469368
GIST	<p>TORONTO -- A widespread network outage left many Canadians without mobile and internet service for most of Friday, disrupting police, business and court services as crowds flocked to work at coffee shops with Wi-Fi.</p> <p>Rogers Communications Inc. said it started restoring service late in the day and said its teams "are working hard to get everyone back online as quickly as possible."</p> <p>The outage began early in the morning and stretched into the evening, interrupting services across retailers and credit card processors, police and courts, airlines and train networks.</p> <p>The company offered no explanation for what caused the outage, how many customers were impacted or where they were located.</p> <p>"We know how much you rely on our networks. Today we have let you down. We are working to make this right as quickly as we can. We will continue to keep you updated, including when services will be back online."</p> <p>Toronto's Go Transit said in a tweet that parts of its system were affected by the outage and fares could not be purchased using debit or credit cards. E-tickets may also be unavailable, it warned.</p> <p>Police in Toronto and Ottawa warned of connection problems when Canadians called 911.</p> <p>"If your call fails, please try again, or call from a landline or cellphone with another provider," Ottawa Police said on Twitter.</p> <p>The outage forced the postponement of The Weeknd's tour stop at Toronto's Rogers Centre. The Toronto date was one of only two set for Canada.</p> <p>Scarborough Health Network, which operates three hospitals and eight satellite sites in Toronto, requested physicians and staff to head to their workplaces for any on-call shifts until the disruption is resolved.</p>

In Quebec, Peter Nygard's Montreal court appearance on sex-related charges was put off because the fashion mogul, who is detained in a Toronto jail, couldn't connect by video conference. His bail hearing will now take place next week.

Service Canada tweeted it too was impacted by outage, with call centers and offices, including ones that issue passports, affected. The outage stands to exacerbate passport delays that have left Canadians lined up outside Service Canada offices for lengthy periods of time as the government works through a backlog.

Canada Border Services Agency warned that people may not be able to complete submissions through the ArriveCAN app — a mandatory requirement for all cross-border travelers.

Many retailers and businesses had trouble accepting payments because Interac, which processes electronic financial transactions, said its online and checkout debit offerings and e-transfer services were impacted.

As a result, the Confederation Bridge, which links the provinces of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, was unable to accept debit cards Friday morning. Canada's Wonderland in Vaughan, Ontario, said amusement park goers could only pay with credit cards.

Downdetector, a website that tracks outages, showed people started reporting problems with Rogers' service around 4:30 a.m. EDT and by 7 a.m. 20,000 reports had been logged.

Many Rogers customers scrambled to find internet service, heading to coffee shops to connect and trade tales of the outage.

Kathryn Bowen, 30, an independent fashion designer, spent Friday morning on the floor of a Starbucks in Toronto's financial district, videoconferencing with clients.

"I don't really know where to go because if I go home, I don't have internet," said Bowen. "I can't even step outside and text anyone because Rogers doesn't work on my phone either, so I'm just sitting here until my phone dies basically."

Roseanna Chen, 27, relied on a coffee shop as well, after her workplace's internet was hit by the outage, but found the cafe's wireless network became unstable as it filled with people.

"We're trying to see if (the office Wi-Fi) comes back," said Chen, an accounting associate at Imperial PFS Canada. "If it doesn't, we'll probably try and head back home, but my internet at home is also out."

The country's telecom sector is dominated by three large carriers — Rogers, BCE Inc. and Telus Corp. — and their hold on the industry has long been a concern of academics, who have called for regulators to increase competition for mobile and internet services in Canada.

"The outage is illuminating the general lack of competition in telecommunications in Canada," said Vass Bednar, executive director of McMaster University's master of public policy program.

Federal Industry Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne said in a statement that the government was monitoring the situation closely and had told Rogers "how important it is that this matter be resolved as soon as possible and for the company to provide prompt and clear communication directly to those impacted."

Meanwhile, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre called on the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to launch an inquiry under the Telecommunications Act into the outage. The commission said it was reviewing the request.

	Telus wasn't impacted by the outage, but the Rogers rival warned that some customers may experience "slower than normal" data speeds because of increased usage by customers without access to home internet.
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HEADLINE	07/11 Spotlight: 1yr after chaotic Afghanistan exit
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/1-year-later-biden-administration-braces-spotlight-chaotic-afghanistan-rcna37491
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Biden administration recently began discussing how to handle the anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan next month to avoid missteps that could add to President Joe Biden's political woes, according to six administration officials.</p> <p>The National Security Council also has been reaching out over the past few weeks to the Defense and State department and intelligence officials to check on the status of their internal reviews of the withdrawal, officials said, as Biden's advisers brace for a renewed spotlight on a widely criticized effort that shook his standing with Americans.</p> <p>The comprehensive review of the withdrawal, which the White House vowed to undertake nearly a year ago, is still not complete, officials said. While the intelligence community's review is close to finished, much of that report is expected to be classified. The Pentagon's and the State Department's reviews are ongoing, officials said. They also said the White House has not yet decided what might be made public or turned over to Congress.</p> <p>"We know next month will give us an appropriate opportunity to honor the service and sacrifice of those we lost, as well as recognize the many people we saved," a spokesperson for the National Security Council said. "We are also focused on how we are on a stronger strategic footing now that the war is over. We are continuing to help people leave Afghanistan and resettle in the U.S. through Operation Allies Welcome, and we will continue to ensure that we remain vigilant and are appropriately positioned to counter any terrorism threats."</p> <p>The National Security Council's status checks with agencies about its promised review and internal discussions on how to approach the withdrawal anniversary come as Biden's job approval among Americans has reached new lows. His aides hope to mitigate further political damage from a moment that will remind Americans of an effort many of them consider one of Biden's biggest failures, at a time when they are already questioning his effectiveness on a host of issues.</p> <p>And while planning for an anniversary or any other milestone is routine for any White House, it is usually focused on celebratory moments, such as the president's signing major legislation into law or widely praised national security successes.</p> <p>The Afghanistan withdrawal, by contrast, was one of the darkest chapters of Biden's presidency. It marked a turning point, seven months after Biden took office, that raised questions among Republicans and Democrats about the competence of his administration. Indeed, the White House expects, and has begun planning for, congressional investigations into the withdrawal if Republicans win the House or the Senate in November's midterm elections, according to people familiar with the matter.</p> <p>The internal discussions about how — or how not — to approach the anniversary have so far been coordinated by John Kirby, who recently moved from press secretary at the Pentagon to a senior communications post at the National Security Council. Kirby recently held two conference calls — one on July 1 and another on Friday — with officials from the State Department, the Pentagon, the Department of Homeland Security, the intelligence community and other agencies to discuss the issue.</p>

Administration officials said the discussions are designed to try to coordinate any efforts various agencies might be planning to mark the occasion and to ensure that different parts of the administration convey a common message and tone. Among the White House's top concerns is that someone in the administration might do something that could be seen as insensitive to the families of the 13 service members killed in a bombing at the Kabul airport on Aug. 26, officials said.

Administration officials said they have scoured the calendars of agencies, including the State Department and the Pentagon, for previously planned events next month that could be considered "tone deaf," as a senior administration official put it, if they coincided with the anniversary of the withdrawal effort.

Two officials described the National Security Council's goal as making sure no one in the administration does anything "stupid."

The president's aides plan to emphasize what they argue was a successful operation to evacuate tens of thousands of people from Afghanistan after the administration was caught flat-footed by the swift fall of Kabul, trying to push back against criticism that the administration could have done a better job, officials said.

But that could prove difficult given other moments throughout last August that defined the withdrawal for many Americans, as well as Biden's own public remarks promising a "responsible, deliberate and safe" withdrawal and wrongly predicting the Afghan government and military would maintain control for much longer than they did.

Less than six weeks before Kabul fell to the Taliban, Biden told Americans that "the likelihood there's going to be the Taliban overrunning everything and owning the whole country is highly unlikely."

The chaos that followed the takeover on Aug. 15, with Americans and Afghans swarming the Kabul airport desperately trying to evacuate, are among the most searing images from the withdrawal. Other events that helped solidify the view among a majority of Americans that the withdrawal was far from a success include the bombing that killed 13 U.S. troops, the botched U.S. military airstrike on Aug. 29 that killed an Afghan aid worker and his family, and the departure of the last U.S. troops on Aug. 30 while Americans and Afghans who had helped the U.S. during the 20-year war were left behind.

Specific ideas under discussion to mark the anniversary next month include steps as basic as having top officials issue written statements, such as Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, officials said. Officials have also discussed releasing statistics about what the administration views as a successful withdrawal effort if reporters ask for information about the anniversary, officials said.

As part of the effort not to make any public moves that could be perceived as being insensitive to the families of the U.S. service members who were killed, officials said they are leaning away from any plans for a commemoration event to mark the attack on the airport or the final withdrawal of all Americans.

Instead, they are looking at issuing written statements to recognize the service members who were killed, as well as the U.S. troops and diplomats who served in Afghanistan during the war.

The administration is also considering a similar approach to the U.S. airstrike in late August that killed an Afghan aid worker and his family, officials said.

During the withdrawal in August, Biden's approval rating dropped, and only 25% of Americans approved of his handling of the crisis, according to a NBC News poll at the time. And while other factors have dragged down Americans' confidence in Biden's leadership, specifically soaring inflation and high gas prices, the withdrawal was an inflection point. The proportion of Americans who disapproved of Biden's leadership increased by 9 percentage points from April 2021 to August, according to the August NBC News poll.

Return to Top	<p>The White House expects an array of new questions about the withdrawal around the anniversary, some of them about Americans who are still in Afghanistan, Afghans who have been unable to leave and the whereabouts of the tens of thousands who did, and the status of the country again under Taliban rule.</p> <p>Officials said they also anticipate inquiries about why the administration’s internal review remains unfinished. On Aug. 17 — two days after the fall of Kabul — national security adviser Jake Sullivan promised the White House “will conduct an extensive hot wash” and “look at every aspect of this from top to bottom.” But that effort did not begin in the relevant agencies until late fall and winter, officials said.</p> <p>It’s not until the three so-called after action reviews are finished that the NSC and the White House will fully assess what took place. The White House has not publicly set a timeline to complete the review. An internal investigation into the attack at the Kabul airport that killed the 13 U.S. service members took about five months; it was released in February.</p> <p>“Once these internal reviews are done, we will have an opportunity to look at the full picture in a way that will help inform future operations,” the NSC spokesperson said. “Departments and agencies will share lessons learned consistent with operational and classification security.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Richmond police thwarted 4 July terror plot
SOURCE	https://www.thecentersquare.com/virginia/richmond-police-thwart-terrorist-plot-by-men-in-u-s-illegally/article_17f71d44-005f-11ed-873f-f7a00fe7704b.html
GIST	<p>(The Center Square) – The Richmond Police Department thwarted a mass shooting of Virginians on July 4 by two men who were in the U.S. illegally. Their plans, which were unknown to the Department of Homeland Security – the agency tasked with preventing terrorist attacks – were thwarted by an anonymous tipster who called the police.</p> <p>Republican Gov. Glen Youngkin called the tipster a “hero.”</p> <p>The suspects, believed to be Guatemalan citizens Julio Alvarado-Dubon, 52, and Rolman Alberto Balacarcel Ac, 38, were in the U.S. illegally. They were arrested on July 1 and July 5, respectively, charged with being non-citizens in possession of a firearm, although they are likely to face additional charges.</p> <p>They both had Colorado driver’s licenses; one had a Guatemala ID, the other a Mexico ID, according to an affidavit filed by Detective Michael Kiniry.</p> <p>A Homeland Security Investigations agent determined that Balacarcel Ac had been previously deported twice and has connections to the Mexican Los Zetas cartel, according to the affidavit. Alvarado-Dubon, who’s lived in Richmond for three years and works in the construction industry, has a visa that expired four years ago.</p> <p>The Los Zetas are currently warring with other cartels for control of a section of the Texas-Mexico border and have a heavy presence across the Rio Grande River from Del Rio, Texas. The Del Rio Sector in Texas rivals the Rio Grande Sector for having the heaviest traffic of illegal activity where people from over 150 countries are entering Texas illegally.</p> <p>Officials haven’t yet said where or how the men entered the U.S.</p> <p>At a press conference last week, Richmond Police Chief Gerald Smith said the tipster overheard a phone call indicating the men had planned to attack the Dogwood Dell Amphitheater where an annual fireworks show is held. The amphitheater holds 2,400 people and is owned and operated by the Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities. Summer long celebrations of the arts and events are held there.</p>

A motivation for the plot hasn't been disclosed, however, Smith told reporters, "We know their intent. Their intent was to conduct a mass shooting at our Fourth of July celebration.

"The success of this particular investigation can only be juxtaposed against the horrors in which the rest of the country has seen. There is no telling how many lives ... this hero citizen saved from one phone call."

The tipster told police that Balcarcel Ac showed him three guns on June 21. On the same day the tipster called police, July 1, Alvarado-Dubon was arrested and police allegedly seized two rifles, one handgun, and over 200 rounds of ammunition from his place of residence in the Richmond area.

Balacarcel Ac was put under surveillance, with the FBI and DHS officials assisting in the investigation, Smith told reporters. He was eventually taken into custody in Albermarle County outside Charlottesville.

Federal law prohibits individuals who are in the U.S. illegally from purchasing firearms.

Richmond authorities say they are working with Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to trace where the men purchased the weapons and ammunition. The Los Zetas cartel works with local gangs whose members don't purchase guns legally.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement have placed detainers on both men to take them into federal custody. They are currently being held in local jails; Alvarado-Dubon in Richmond and Balcarcel Ac in Charlottesville.

"It was a very serious threat. Any threat against life and certainly that of a mass shooting is gravely serious. No further information is being provided about this beyond what's been provided at this stage," police spokesperson Tracy Walker told the Associated Press. "The suspect clearly announced a plan to carry this out and clearly had the means to do so based on the weapons and several hundred rounds of ammunition that was seized."

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HEADLINE	07/10 Suspected terror explosion northern Togo
SOURCE	https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/suspected-terrorist-explosion-in-northern-togo-kills-7-children/2634404
GIST	<p>Seven children were killed in a suspected terrorist explosion in northern Togo in the night from Saturday to Sunday, local media reported.</p> <p>"A rescue team was immediately dispatched to the scene," said Motaog Radio and Television in Dapaong, the town where the explosion occurred.</p> <p>The local radio quoted a victim's parent as saying he was shocked and that he heard "a loud explosion never heard before."</p> <p>He discovered children's bodies lying on the ground which he said were difficult to identify.</p> <p>No official source has yet commented on the incident.</p> <p>The incident may join a list of terrorist attacks seen in recent months in the West African country, which had previously been spared.</p> <p>On June 16, an attack was foiled in the Gnoaga and Gouloungoushi townships, on the border shared by Togo, Ghana and Burkina Faso in the far north.</p> <p>An attack on the night of May 10 left eight soldiers dead and 13 wounded. An Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist group claimed responsibility for it three weeks later, according to the Site Intelligence Group, an American NGO which tracks extremist threats online.</p>

	"Once these attacks start, they don't stop," Joseph Mensah-Boboe, the publisher of online media outlet Imagine Demain, told Anadolu Agency. "This is a new terrorist action despite the strong security method of the government, which has established a state of emergency and its corollaries. This situation is worrying."
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HEADLINE	07/10 French prisoner seeks terror rehabilitation
SOURCE	https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/europe/2022/07/10/after-an-isis-escapade-a-french-prisoner-seeks-rehabilitation/
GIST	<p>In the relative comfort of a prison outside Paris — after nearly five years in a spartan Kurdish detention camp in north-eastern Syria — a policeman's daughter once described as a dangerous terrorist now talks of regaining "the life of a mother and a woman".</p> <p>Emilie Konig, now 37 and the mother of five children, three of them born in Syria, was among the 16 French women repatriated to France this week along with their 35 children.</p> <p>She must now answer for her actions during a Syrian experience that began in 2012 when she turned her back on western society and her middle-class origins to join ISIS.</p> <p>Prosecutors have charged her with involvement in terrorist conspiracy. She is accused of acting as a key propagandist and recruiter who, adopting the name Ummu Tawwab, called for attacks on French targets, including soldiers' wives.</p> <p>Konig insists she has changed. Her lawyer says she is ready to co-operate fully with the authorities and recognises the hurt she has caused.</p> <p>But Konig has not always been so contrite. She told one interviewer she did not see why she should be jailed, declaring: "I have no blood on my hands."</p> <p>Agnes de Feo, a sociologist and documentary maker who met Konig several times before her departure for Syria, told <i>The National</i> her interviews revealed a "tortured state of mind".</p> <p>"I don't know what she did in Syria," she said. "My memory is of a rebellious young woman who was looking for a new life, and who may have been attracted by [ISIS] because she no longer had hope in France. That is not excusing her, just understanding her mind."</p> <p>Like many of the young western women drawn to ISIS, Konig was the product of a troubled childhood with no father figure, an abusive relationship and a search for identity. She was a toddler when her father, whom she adored, left her mother.</p> <p>At school, she was a gifted gymnast until a knee injury forced her to give up. She left school early but had a modest qualification in sales and might have made a respectable career.</p> <p>She converted to Islam at 17 even though, among many contradictions, she later took a job as a barmaid and fell for a non-practising Algerian man who was jailed for drug offences and subjected her to violence. Konig bore him two children before escaping from the relationship.</p> <p>Konig was captured by Kurdish forces in 2017. She had been added to UN and US blacklists as a dangerous terrorist combatant. Her third child was the son of a fighter, who was later killed, but it is not known who fathered her other children, twin girls.</p> <p>Prof Raphael Liogier, another sociologist who met Konig, told the magazine <i>Paris Match</i> she had more of a profile of an Islamist extremist man.</p>

“What struck me is that she had a more radical, more extreme profile than other women we met,” said Prof Liogier. She was not an ideologue but had a strong desire for revenge.”

For her, Islamist extremist figures counted “more than texts, heroic aesthetics prevailed over ideology”, Prof Liogier said.

But how did the “cuddly, sweet kid ... my princess” remembered by her mother, become a cheerleader for terrorism, willing to pose on camera while practising with a shotgun?

“Emilie was abandoned very young by her father,” said Ms de Feo, who has extensively researched the wearing of veils by Muslim women in France.

“She still says she loves him. She was also starved of male company at the time, hurt by destructive relationships with past partners.

“She was beaten by her husband who was imprisoned for drug trafficking. She was a wounded woman. And oddly always looking for a virile man, hence her fascination with the fighters of ISIS.”

Ms de Feo has supplied Konig’s lawyer with footage of her interviews. “For normal people watching TV, they’re going to want her to be judged and to suffer in prison,” she said.

“But for me who knew her personally, I think that the hardships she underwent in her life exculpate her today. I think coercion is a bad solution. She has already paid for what she has done.”

In interviews, Konig’s lawyer, Emmanuel Daoud, said she had “an absolute desire to co-operate with French justice and answer all the questions put to her”.

Her main focus, he says, is to be reunited with her children, from whom she is currently separated, “She will not be in hiding in any way,” Mr Daoud told *Le Journal du Dimanche*. “She wants to make sure to give herself the means, if she convinces the judges, to resume her normal life in the medium and long term as ‘a woman and a mother’.”

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HEADLINE	07/08 India concern: rise of lone wolf terrorism
SOURCE	https://www.theweek.in/theweek/current/2022/07/08/increasing-instances-of-lone-wolf-terrorism-in-india-is-a-major-concern.html
GIST	<p>Lone wolf terrorism is not a recent phenomenon, but India has largely remained immune to it. At least, until recently. The horrific beheading of tailor Kanhaiya Lal Teli in the tourist town of Udaipur in Rajasthan on June 28 has exposed the cracks in the country’s security and intelligence machinery. Extremist ideologies, propagated by global terror outfits and enabled by the internet and social media platforms, has condensed into a short attack plan that was executed swiftly in Udaipur before any law enforcement agency could respond.</p> <p>The key accused, Mohammed Riyaz Akhtari and Ghaus Mohammad, were arrested within four hours by the Rajasthan anti-terrorism squad, but the grisly video of the killing, recorded and posted on social media by the fanatics, sent shock waves across the country. The damage was done: curfews, religious tensions, internet shutdowns and fear spread quickly in many parts of Rajasthan and other states.</p> <p>“We treated the case as an act of terror right from the beginning,” said Ashok Rathore, chief of the Rajasthan ATS and special operations group. Keeping in mind that Ghaus was closely connected with a Karachi-based Islamist organisation called the Dawat-e-Islami, transnational links were investigated, he said. Investigation has shown that Ghaus visited Karachi in 2014. “We arrested four accused (including the two prime accused) and interrogated five people who are to be examined further by the National Investigation Agency,” said Rathore. “We are closely working with the NIA and other agencies,” he said.</p>

NIA officials said the accused, who had conducted a recce of Kanhaiya Lal's shop, were in touch with several Pakistani numbers over social media platforms like WhatsApp, Skype, Facebook messenger and Snapchat. The digital footprints show a stamp of extremist ideology, posing a major challenge for law enforcement agencies. Even though the initial probe showed that the accused might not be active members of a terrorist organisation in the traditional way, they carry a high degree of ideological attachment and affiliation as lone wolves whose roots cannot be traced to a single source. While creating such hydra-headed monsters quickly is not hard, it is really difficult to eliminate them overnight.

Several lone wolf attacks have been traced back to Islamic State or Al Qaeda ideology like Omar Mateen who carried out a mass shooting at an LGBT nightclub in Orlando, Florida, in 2016 or the 2020 knife attack in Nice, France, in which a woman was beheaded and two others were killed. But India's geographical proximity with Pakistan and Afghanistan has made it a breeding ground for radicalisation of youth as they become easy targets of extremist literature and propaganda.

The process of self-radicalisation over the internet makes it easy to meet fellow-travellers, giving people like Riyaz and Ghaus entry into a global community of extremists before they finally turn to terrorist activities, according to investigators. "When such self-driven fanatics find an enabling environment or a perceived injustice and are not bound by social and economic obligations, they carry out terror acts like the one witnessed in Udaipur," said a senior counter terrorism official in New Delhi.

Rajasthan Director General of Police M.L. Lather said while it might be too early to pinpoint the role of a particular terrorist outfit, the fact that Ghaus visited Karachi, the headquarters of the Dawat-e-Islami, between December 2014 and February 2015, raised a red flag. "We have not found any terror links to Dawat-e-Islami. But the accused met different people when he visited Karachi to participate in the activities of the organisation and we are looking into it," said Lather. He said the probe revealed that the accused were radicalised over the internet and social media. "All we can say is that they were in touch with at least a dozen Pakistani numbers. Further investigation will reveal more about their links," he said.

The Dawat-e-Islami, founded in 1981, is one of Pakistan's largest Sunni-Barelvi organisations, with common roots on both sides of the border. After its name cropped up during the investigation, Maulana Mahmood Qadri, a senior leader at the Karachi headquarters, said there had not been a single incident where any of their students, followers or teachers were involved in any violent activity. "We are purely an educational, missionary and charity institution and preach peace in our lives," he told a news agency.

But it has not been a smooth ride for the organisation. It was under scanner in 2011 after the killing of Punjab governor Salman Taseer by his bodyguard Mumtaz Qadri who described the murder as a punishment for blasphemy. The 2020 stabbing outside the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo put the organisation under global scrutiny. "Much like the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, who are co-Barelvīs, they are extremely sensitive to anything perceived even remotely offensive about the Prophet," said an intelligence official. The Indian wing of the organisation which is also known by the same name has, however, completely dissociated itself from the global organisation. Counter terrorism officials in Mumbai, where the Indian wing has its headquarters, said the ties were completely severed after the 1993 Mumbai bombings which first made New Delhi label Pakistan a sponsor of terrorism.

The Dawat-e-Islami has been running its activities in Kanpur and there is no restriction on the organisation. The Uttar Pradesh ATS, which has joined the multi-agency probe in Udaipur, is examining whether Kanhaiya's attackers got any logistical aid from Kanpur. The focus, however, is more on online platforms where the faceless and the nameless continue to keep the pot boiling. Uttar Pradesh has been high on the radar of terror groups in the past as a fertile ground for the recruitment of disgruntled youth. The state has witnessed a noticeable change over the years. Police sources said thousands of online posts by radical groups are being detected every day.

Prashant Kumar, additional director general (law and order) in the UP police, said a specialised social media cell was monitoring online activities 24/7 and that no person misusing such platforms would be spared. A senior counter terrorism official said only a thin line existed between "radicalised elements" linked to a particular organisation wilfully executing a terror act and those who were "self-radicalised" and

were using different organisations and platforms to remain under the radar of police forces. But in both cases, the outcome is the same—a brutal killing triggered by an event like the Nupur Sharma controversy, with a common goal of spreading terror and panic. The NIA has widened its probe to examine suspected linkages between the Udaipur hacking case and the June 21 killing of a shopkeeper Umesh Kolhe in Amravati in Maharashtra. Kolhe was on his way home after closing his shop when two men on a motorcycle allegedly stabbed him in the neck.

“If a similarity or trend emerges, it may point towards the creation of a new online terror module where self-radicalised individuals carry out brutal killings after online indoctrination and weapons training,” said an officer. Investigators said the need of the hour was not to jump into conclusions and label terrorists under a single brand name. Instead, it is important to bolster the capabilities of intelligence and law enforcement agencies to meet the changing face of terror in the country. “Just like The Resistance Front in Kashmir, which is a conglomerate of operatives from the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Hizbul Mujahideen, the urban terror outfits, too, have a history of operatives changing names and banners once they come on the radar of national and international counter terrorism organisations,” said former NIA special director N.R. Wasan. He said radicalised boys of the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) formed the feeder line when the Indian Mujahideen was born. “What is important is to create conditions to steer the youth away from terror indoctrination,” he said.

The Union home ministry is assisting states to undertake de-radicalisation programmes involving community elders, religious organisations and family members. States like Kerala have already undertaken such measures successfully, while others like UP and Rajasthan are striving hard to follow their lead. “It is an uphill task to identify the radicalised youth before they undertake some action. The challenge also lies in seeing how long can such attempts continue at a stretch,” said Lather.

Mohammed Tahir Madani, director of Jamiatul Falah, the madrasa in Azamgarh in UP from where a number of SIMI leaders emerged, said blaming an entire organisation for the mistakes committed by a few was unfair and could drive a wedge between communities. “To associate any organisation with terror is a big allegation and it must be corroborated first. Secondly, any religious or holy texts are prone to wrong interpretation. But to say that the madrasas are teaching the youth to take law into their own hands sets a negative narrative,” said Madani.

It is indeed a tightrope walk for investigators and governments to book the culprits and rope in the community to fight terror indoctrination and extremist ideology. It also requires political will to steer clear of the blame game. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, who is facing flak from the BJP for allegedly indulging in appeasement politics, has demanded swift investigation by the NIA into the Udaipur murder.

Ashok K. Behuria, senior fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, said over-interpretation and attempts by the media to find causes at the wrong place could muddy the investigations. Behuria, who has researched extensively on sectarian conflicts in Pakistan, said whether the terror accused in Udaipur were lone wolves or were affiliated to some organisation would become clear once the NIA finished its probe. But before that, the challenge is to thwart online terror activities that have picked up after the murder. “The Udaipur killing is the worst kind of terror act and we all must condemn it,” said Behuria. “At the same time, we should allow investigations to be carried out without jumping into conclusions.”

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HEADLINE	07/09 Florida man jailed 20yrs; ISIS support
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/09/us/florida-man-isis.html
GIST	<p>A Florida man who had pledged support to ISIS was sentenced on Thursday to 20 years in prison for uploading a video he believed would help the terrorist group make bombs, the federal authorities said on Thursday.</p> <p>The man, Romeo Xavier Langhorne, 32, of St. Augustine, Fla., pleaded guilty in March 2021 to one count of providing material support to ISIS, according to a statement from the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the</p>

Middle District of Florida. The sentence, handed down in U.S. District Court in Jacksonville, also included an additional 15 years of supervised release, the statement said.

Prosecutors said that, while in an ISIS chat room online in December 2018 and January 2019, Mr. Langhorne had expressed interest in creating a video that would improve on existing videos about making and using a deadly type of explosive.

In February 2019, Mr. Langhorne “began communicating” with an undercover F.B.I. agent posing as an ISIS representative, prosecutors said. He told the agent about his plans to make the video and sought help to create it, they said.

Mr. Langhorne told the agent that the video should include disclaimers that it was for educational purposes so that it wouldn’t be removed by internet providers, prosecutors said, but that his real purpose was to arm ISIS followers and others with knowledge about how to make the explosive.

The F.B.I. produced the video — which included the use of a chemically inactive formula that would not produce an explosion — and Mr. Langhorne uploaded it to a video-sharing website, prosecutors said. He was arrested in November 2019 in Roanoke, Va., where he lived at the time.

A lawyer for Mr. Langhorne, John Leombruno, declined to comment late Friday. In a sentencing memorandum filed on June 27, Mr. Leombruno painted his client as socially awkward and said he had various untreated mental health issues, including schizophrenia. Mr. Langhorne turned to the internet to seek affirmation and acceptance, his lawyer said.

Mr. Leombruno said that his client had been targeted by the government because of his “provocative comments and discussions on various social media platforms regarding the religion of Islam.”

“Acting in an undercover capacity, they initiated conversations with Mr. Langhorne and incited the production of a video that would inform individuals on how to make” the explosive in question, Mr. Leombruno wrote.

“To make certain that a prosecution of the defendant would occur, the government produced the actual video in question,” he continued, adding that the agent had “circled back to Mr. Langhorne when the interactions and conversations between them grew cold.”

The authorities said that Mr. Langhorne had come to the attention of law enforcement officials in 2014, when he posted statements and images in support of ISIS to his Facebook account, according to a criminal complaint filed in November 2019.

The complaint said that since then, Mr. Langhorne had posted many other statements on social media demonstrating “ideological support” for the group, including a speech by Anwar Al-Awlaki, an American citizen deemed a terrorist who was killed in a September 2011 drone strike in Yemen.

Sherri E. Onks, an F.B.I. agent in Jacksonville, said in the statement that the threat posed by Mr. Langhorne was “always very real” and that the authorities had disrupted his plan early, averting a threat.

“We remain as vigilant as ever in our efforts to protect the public from others who support terrorist organizations,” she said.

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HEADLINE	07/08 FBI: domestic terror link to foreign threats
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/07/08/wray-fbi-terror-extremists-global-threat/
GIST	LONDON — Many domestic terrorism cases now have an international component, as would-be killers are “egging each other on” and drawing inspiration from racist or neo-Nazi attacks overseas, the head of the FBI and his British counterpart said Friday.

FBI Director Christopher A. Wray, speaking to reporters alongside Ken McCallum, director general of the British domestic security agency MI5, said their agencies have spent decades developing tip-sharing systems to handle international terrorism cases, but that “muscle memory” is now being applied to domestic terrorism investigations.

“Travel and technology,” Wray said, “have really blurred the lines between foreign and domestic threats.” The FBI director said the frequently cited expression of “connecting the dots” to stop a terrorist attack has taken on a new kind of urgency for many investigators because attackers can mobilize so quickly and often are not part of a large, well-established network.

In many terrorism cases, Wray said, “you’re talking about largely lone actors, maybe one or two other people who don’t have to do a lot of plotting, who don’t need to have a lot of money ... don’t need to do a lot of training, and whose targets are pretty much everywhere.”

As a result, Wray continued, “there are very few dots out there, as compared to, say, the 9/11 model of an al-Qaeda sleeper cell. ... With fewer dots and much less time in which to connect those dots, it may well be that Ken’s folks have one dot and we have the other dot, and if we’re not super latched up, we’re going to miss the only picture that’s out there and it’s got to happen fast.”

McCallum said in Britain, investigations involving individuals motivated by racism, neo-Nazism, or related hateful ideologies represent about 20 percent of the terrorism caseload. Many of the individuals of concern are young.

“The neo-Nazi racist groups, there is, if anything, a greater emphasis on juveniles within the caseload, a more obsessive interest in weaponry — in many cases even before there is some kind of attack planned,” said McCallum. “There’s kind of an interest in weaponry for its own sake, so it creates a very difficult cocktail of risk we have to manage with great care.”

Wray noted that while racist violence has generally been categorized as a domestic terror threat, increasingly the perpetrators appear to draw inspiration, often through social media, from people in foreign countries who conducted their own terrorist attacks.

In the recent [Buffalo supermarket shooting](#) in which a young White man allegedly targeted Black shoppers at a supermarket, the suspect’s writing showed admiration for a 2019 gunman who [killed 51 people at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand](#). Another frequent source of inspiration for such attacks is a 2011 shooting in Oslo by [a far-right extremist](#) who killed 77 people.

“You have people who may not be conspiring or colluding with each other, but who are in effect inspiring or egging each other on,” said Wray. “You can see that for example with the attack in New Zealand, the attack in Norway, in some sense you see an attack in the U.S. that inspires somebody else to attack somewhere else.”

Those inspirational, international connections mean that the FBI and MI5 have to be constantly “comparing notes on what they are seeing,” the FBI director said.

The two security chiefs spoke to reporters as Wray wrapped up several days of meetings in London with various United Kingdom law enforcement and intelligence officials.

On Wednesday, Wray and McCallum made [rare joint speeches](#) to sound an alarm to the British business community about the danger that Chinese hacking and covert influence operations pose to Western companies’ long term interests.

McCallum said the problem of Chinese espionage is at the top of the agenda for the intelligence-sharing alliance known as the Five Eyes, which includes the United States, the U.K., Canada, Australia and New Zealand.”

Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	07/10 First K-Pod orca calf spotted since 2011
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/orca-calf-spotted-off-san-juan-islands/281-6ff60881-040d-4355-9471-00709f505330
GIST	<p>SAN JUAN, Wash. — Orca organizations had been losing hope about the future of a family of Southern Resident Killer Whales known as the K Pod. However, on Saturday, the Center for Whale Research shared photos of the newest member of the pod. It's the first calf born into the K Pod since 2011.</p> <p>Video shared by the Orca Behavior Institute shows mom and baby off the shores of the San Juan Islands along the Haro Strait on Saturday. The Center for Whale Research said the two were also spotted on the west side of Vancouver Island.</p> <p>"It's always a rush of excitement when we see a brand new baby in this endangered population.," said Monika Wieland Shields with the Orca Behavior Institute.</p> <p>Shields caught a glimpse of the calf Saturday night.</p> <p>"I knew even from a distance when I saw that tiny whale pop up that it was going to be the newest calf and it was super exciting to see it next to K20 who's the presumed mother," said Shields.</p> <p>For the first time this summer, members from all three orca pods local to Puget Sound were spotted together in the Haro Strait, but K20 and the new calf, named K45, stood out. It's believe this is K20's first calf in 18 years.</p> <p>"We hope that this is a sign that K Pod is turning a corner and that they're able to get enough to eat to successfully reproduce and raise offspring," said Shields.</p> <p>"We'd kind of given up. I mean, tentatively, you never give up, but not really sure if K20 would have another calf because it's been so long," said Howard Garrett, the Co-founder of the Orca Network.</p> <p>K20 is 36 years old. Garrett said K20 was believed to be a male until she had her first calf in 2004. Garrett hopes the newborn is a female, however, the sex of the newborn is still unknown.</p> <p>"The frosting on the cake was at that calf looks good," said Garrett. "Where an Orca is white, this calf is white and when they're newborn, they're very orangey...when they get that, that nice white tone, that's a good sign that they're developing well"</p> <p>It's estimated the young calf is only a few months old. It's future is still up in the air and the next several months will be crucial for survival. From a distance, researchers will be keeping a close watch.</p> <p>"We're looking for energy levels. We're looking to see if that little calf begins to explore a little bit," said Garrett, "Of course, mom will keep very close tabs and call baby back if there's any need, but just to see if there's, you know, a lot of spark in that little calf."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 What are the Uber files?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/jul/10/what-are-the-uber-files-guide
GIST	The Uber files is a global investigation into a trove of 124,000 confidential documents from the tech company that were leaked to the Guardian. The data reveals how Uber flouted the law, duped police, exploited violence against drivers and secretly lobbied governments across the world.

The leak consists of emails, iMessages and WhatsApp exchanges between the Silicon Valley giant's most senior executives, as well as memos, presentations, notebooks, briefing papers and invoices.

The files cover 40 countries and span [from 2013 to 2017](#), the period in which Uber went from a plucky startup to a global behemoth, brute-forcing its way into cities around the world with little regard for taxi regulations.

To facilitate a global investigation, the Guardian shared the data with 180 journalists at more than 40 media organisations via the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

What do they reveal?

- The cache of more than 124,000 internal Uber files [lays bare the ethically questionable practices](#) through which the company barged its way into new markets, often where existing laws or regulations made its operations illegal, before lobbying aggressively for those same laws or regulations to be altered to accommodate it.
- As economy minister, [Emmanuel Macron went to extraordinary lengths to support Uber](#) and its campaign to disrupt France's closed-shop taxi industry, even telling the company he had brokered a "deal" with its opponents in the French cabinet.
- Senior executives at Uber [ordered the use of a "kill switch"](#) to prevent police and regulators from accessing sensitive data during raids on its offices in at least six countries.
- Two of Barack Obama's most senior presidential campaign advisers, David Plouffe and Jim Messina, [discussed helping Uber get to access leaders, officials and diplomats](#).
- The former vice-president of the European Commission Neelie Kroes [secretly helped Uber to lobby a string of top Dutch politicians](#), including the country's prime minister. Her relationship with the company was so sensitive that its top European lobbyist warned it was "highly confidential and should not be discussed outside this group".

Why does the period covered by the leak matter?

The five-year span covered by the data covered a crucial period of Uber's expansion.

When the app first launched publicly in San Francisco in 2010, Uber customers could only hire luxury black vehicles. The introduction the following year of UberX, which enabled drivers to pick up passengers in their own cars, quickly gained traction and by early 2013 the service was operating in more than 30 locations – mostly in the US.

It was around this point that Uber sought to rapidly expand overseas. The period covered by the leaked data was marked by frenzied growth, as Uber used its record venture capital investments to subsidise journeys in cities across the world. By June 2017, when its controversial co-founder [Travis Kalanick](#) resigned as chief executive, Uber was operating in more than 600 locations.

Kalanick's replacement, Dara Khosrowshahi, set out to prove to shareholders that the company could deliver profitable growth. Five years later, Uber – now valued at \$45bn – provides on-demand transport in more than 10,000 cities.

How have Uber and Travis Kalanick responded to the investigation?

[In a statement](#), Uber's senior vice-president of public affairs, Jill Hazelbaker, said: "We have not and will not make excuses for past behaviour that is clearly not in line with our present values. Instead, we ask the public to judge us by what we've done over the last five years and what we will do in the years to come."

She continued: "Uber is now one of the largest platforms for work in the world and an integral part of everyday life for over 100 million people. We've moved from an era of confrontation to one of collaboration, demonstrating a willingness to come to the table and find common ground with former opponents, including labour unions and taxi companies.

"We are now regulated in more than 10,000 cities around the world, working at all levels of government to improve the lives of those using our platform and the cities we serve."

	<p>In a separate statement, Travis Kalanick’s spokesperson said he “never authorised any actions or programs that would obstruct justice in any country”, and he “never suggested that Uber should take advantage of violence at the expense of driver safety. Any accusation that Mr Kalanick directed, engaged in, or was involved in any of these activities is completely false.”</p> <p>“The reality was that Uber’s expansion initiatives were led by over a hundred leaders in dozens of countries around the world and at all times under the direct oversight and with the full approval of Uber’s robust legal, policy, and compliance groups.”</p> <p>The spokesperson added: “When Mr Kalanick co-founded Uber in 2009, he and the rest of the Uber team pioneered an industry that has now become a verb. To do this required a change of the status quo, as Uber became a serious competitor in an industry where competition had been historically outlawed.</p> <p>“As a natural and foreseeable result, entrenched industry interests all over the world fought to prevent the much-needed development of the transportation industry.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Leaked files: Uber broke laws, duped police
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/jul/10/uber-files-leak-reveals-global-lobbying-campaign
GIST	<p>A leaked trove of confidential files has revealed the inside story of how the tech giant Uber flouted laws, duped police, exploited violence against drivers and secretly lobbied governments during its aggressive global expansion.</p> <p>The unprecedented leak to the Guardian of more than 124,000 documents – known as the Uber files – lays bare the ethically questionable practices that fuelled the company’s transformation into one of Silicon Valley’s most famous exports.</p> <p>The leak spans a five-year period when Uber was run by its co-founder Travis Kalanick, who tried to introduce the cab-hailing service into cities around the world by brute force, even if that meant breaching laws and taxi regulations.</p> <p>During the fierce global backlash, the data shows how Uber tried to shore up support by discreetly courting prime ministers, presidents, billionaires, oligarchs and media barons.</p> <p>Leaked messages suggest Uber executives were at the same time under no illusions about the company’s law-breaking, with one executive joking they had become “pirates” and another conceding: “We’re just fucking illegal.”</p> <p>The cache of files, which span 2013 to 2017, includes more than 83,000 emails, iMessages and WhatsApp messages, including often frank and unvarnished communications between Kalanick and his top team of executives.</p> <p>In one exchange, Kalanick dismissed concerns from other executives that sending Uber drivers to a protest in France put them at risk of violence from angry opponents in the taxi industry. “I think it’s worth it,” he shot back. “Violence guarantee[s] success.”</p> <p>In a statement, Kalanick’s spokesperson said he “never suggested that Uber should take advantage of violence at the expense of driver safety” and any suggestion he was involved in such activity would be completely false.</p> <p>The leak also contains texts between Kalanick and Emmanuel Macron, who secretly helped the company in France when he was economy minister, allowing Uber frequent and direct access to him and his staff.</p>

Macron, the French president, appears to have gone to extraordinary lengths to help Uber, even telling the company he had brokered a secret “deal” with its opponents in the French cabinet.

Privately, Uber executives expressed barely disguised disdain for other elected officials who were who were less receptive to the company’s business model.

After the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, who was mayor of Hamburg at the time, pushed back against Uber lobbyists and insisted on paying drivers a minimum wage, an executive told colleagues he was “a real comedian”.

When the then US vice-president, Joe Biden, a supporter of Uber at the time, was late to a meeting with the company at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Kalanick texted a colleague: “I’ve had my people let him know that every minute late he is, is one less minute he will have with me.”

After meeting Kalanick, Biden appears to have amended his prepared speech at Davos to refer to a CEO whose company would give millions of workers “freedom to work as many hours as they wish, manage their own lives as they wish”.

The Guardian led a global investigation into the leaked Uber files, sharing the data with media organisations around the world via the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ). More than 180 journalists at 40 media outlets including Le Monde, Washington Post and the BBC will in the coming days publish a series of investigative reports about the tech giant.

In a statement responding to the leak, Uber admitted to “mistakes and missteps”, but said it had been transformed since 2017 under the leadership of its current chief executive, Dara Khosrowshahi.

“We have not and will not make excuses for past behaviour that is clearly not in line with our present values,” it said. “Instead, we ask the public to judge us by what we’ve done over the last five years and what we will do in the years to come.”

Kalanick’s spokesperson said Uber’s expansion initiatives were “led by over a hundred leaders in dozens of countries around the world and at all times under the direct oversight and with the full approval of Uber’s robust legal, policy and compliance groups”.

‘Embrace the chaos’

The leaked documents pull back the curtains on the methods Uber used to lay the foundations for its empire. One of the world’s largest work platforms, Uber is now a \$43bn (£36bn) company, making approximately 19m journeys a day.

The files cover Uber’s operations across 40 countries during a period in which the company became a global behemoth, bulldozing its cab-hailing service into many of the cities in which it still operates today.

From Moscow to Johannesburg, bankrolled with unprecedented venture capital funding, Uber heavily subsidised journeys, seducing drivers and passengers on to the app with incentives and pricing models that would not be sustainable.

Uber undercut established taxi and cab markets and put pressure on governments to rewrite laws to help pave the way for an app-based, gig-economy model of work that has since proliferated across the world.

In a bid to quell the fierce backlash against the company and win changes to taxi and labour laws, Uber planned to spend an extraordinary \$90m in 2016 on lobbying and public relations, one document suggests.

Its strategy often involved going over the heads of city mayors and transport authorities and straight to the seat of power.

In addition to meeting Biden at Davos, Uber executives met face-to-face with Macron, the Irish prime minister, Enda Kenny, the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and George Osborne, the UK's chancellor at the time. A note from the meeting portrayed Osborne as a "strong advocate".

In a statement, Osborne said it was the explicit policy of the government at the time to meet with global tech firms and "persuade them to invest in Britain, and create jobs here".

While the Davos sitdown with Osborne was declared, the data reveals that six UK Tory cabinet ministers had meetings with Uber that were not disclosed. It is unclear if the meetings should have been declared, exposing confusion around how UK lobbying rules are applied.

The documents indicate Uber was adept at finding unofficial routes to power, applying influence through friends or intermediaries, or seeking out encounters with politicians at which aides and officials were not present.

It enlisted the backing of powerful figures in places such as Russia, Italy and Germany by offering them prized financial stakes in the startup and turning them into "strategic investors".

And in a bid to shape policy debates, it paid prominent academics hundreds of thousands of dollars to produce research that supported the company's claims about the benefits of its economic model.

Despite a well-financed and dogged lobbying operation, Uber's efforts had mixed results. In some places Uber succeeded in persuading governments to rewrite laws, with lasting effects. But elsewhere, the company found itself blocked by entrenched taxi industries, outgunned by local cab-hailing rivals or opposed by leftwing politicians who simply refused to budge.

When faced with opposition, Uber sought to turn it to its advantage, seizing upon it to fuel the narrative its technology was disrupting antiquated transport systems, and urging governments to reform their laws.

As Uber launched across India, Kalanick's top executive in Asia urged managers to focus on driving growth, even when "fires start to burn". "Know this is a normal part of Uber's business," he said. "Embrace the chaos. It means you're doing something meaningful."

Kalanick appeared to put that ethos into practice in January 2016, when Uber's attempts to upend markets in Europe led to angry protests in Belgium, Spain, Italy and France from taxi drivers who feared for their livelihoods.

Amid taxi strikes and riots in Paris, Kalanick ordered French executives to retaliate by encouraging Uber drivers to stage a counter-protest with mass civil disobedience.

Warned that doing so risked putting Uber drivers at risk of attacks from "extreme right thugs" who had infiltrated the taxi protests and were "spoiling for a fight", Kalanick appeared to urge his team to press ahead regardless. "I think it's worth it," he said. "Violence guarantee[s] success. And these guys must be resisted, no? Agreed that right place and time must be thought out."

The decision to send Uber drivers into potentially volatile protests, despite the risks, was consistent with what one senior former executive told the Guardian was a strategy of "weaponising" drivers, and exploiting violence against them to "keep the controversy burning".

It was a playbook that, leaked emails suggest, was repeated in Italy, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

When masked men, reported to be angry taxi drivers, turned on Uber drivers with knuckle-dusters and a hammer in Amsterdam in March 2015, Uber staffers sought to turn it to their advantage to win concessions from the Dutch government.

Driver victims were encouraged to file police reports, which were shared with De Telegraaf, the leading Dutch daily newspaper. They “will be published without our fingerprint on the front page tomorrow”, one manager wrote. “We keep the violence narrative going for a few days, before we offer the solution.”

Kalanick’s spokesperson questioned the authenticity of some documents. She said Kalanick “never suggested that Uber should take advantage of violence at the expense of driver safety” and any suggestion that he was involved in such activity would be “completely false”.

Uber’s spokesperson also acknowledged past mistakes in the company’s treatment of drivers but said no one, including Kalanick, wanted violence against Uber drivers. “There is much our former CEO said nearly a decade ago that we would certainly not condone today,” she said. “But one thing we do know and feel strongly about is that no one at Uber has ever been happy about violence against a driver.”

The ‘kill switch’

Uber drivers were undoubtedly the target of vicious assaults and sometimes murders by furious taxi drivers. And the cab-hailing app, in some countries, found itself battling entrenched and monopolised taxi fleets with cosy relationships with city authorities. Uber often characterised its opponents in the regulated taxi markets as operating a “cartel”.

However, privately, Uber executives and staffers appear to have been in little doubt about the often rogue nature of their own operation.

In internal emails, staff referred to Uber’s “other than legal status”, or other forms of active non-compliance with regulations, in countries including Turkey, South Africa, Spain, the Czech Republic, Sweden, France, Germany, and Russia.

One senior executive wrote in an email: “We are not legal in many countries, we should avoid making antagonistic statements.” Commenting on the tactics the company was prepared to deploy to “avoid enforcement”, another executive wrote: “We have officially become pirates.”

Nairi Hourdajian, Uber’s head of global communications, put it even more bluntly in a message to a colleague in 2014, amid efforts to shut the company down in Thailand and India: “Sometimes we have problems because, well, we’re just fucking illegal.” Contacted by the Guardian, Hourdajian declined to comment.

Kalanick’s spokesperson accused reporters of “pressing its false agenda” that he had “directed illegal or improper conduct”.

Uber’s spokesperson said that, when it started, “ridesharing regulations did not exist anywhere in the world” and transport laws were outdated for a smartphone era.

Across the world, police, transport officials and regulatory agencies sought to clamp down on Uber. In some cities, officials downloaded the app and hailed rides so they could crack down on unlicensed taxi journeys, finding Uber drivers and impounding their cars. Uber offices in dozens of countries were repeatedly raided by authorities.

Against this backdrop, Uber developed sophisticated methods to thwart law enforcement. One was known internally at Uber as a “kill switch”. When an Uber office was raided, executives at the company frantically sent out instructions to IT staff to cut off access to the company’s main data systems, preventing authorities from gathering evidence.

The leaked files suggest the technique, signed off by Uber’s lawyers, was deployed at least 12 times during raids in France, the Netherlands, Belgium, India, Hungary and Romania.

Kalanick’s spokesperson said such “kill switch” protocols were common business practice and not designed to obstruct justice. She said the protocols, which did not delete data, were vetted and approved by

	<p>Uber’s legal department, and the former Uber CEO was never charged in relation to obstruction of justice or a relate offence.</p> <p>Uber’s spokesperson said its kill switch software “should never have been used to thwart legitimate regulatory action” and it had stopped using the system in 2017, when Khosrowshahi replaced Kalanick as CEO.</p> <p>Another executive the leaked files suggest was involved in kill switch protocols was Pierre-Dimitri Gore-Coty, who ran Uber’s operations in western Europe. He now runs Uber Eats, and sits on the company’s 11-strong executive team.</p> <p>Gore-Coty said in a statement he regretted “some of the tactics used to get regulatory reform for ridesharing in the early days”. Looking back, he said: “I was young and inexperienced and too often took direction from superiors with questionable ethics.”</p> <p>Politicians now also face questions about whether they took direction from Uber executives.</p> <p>When a French police official in 2015 appeared to ban one of Uber’s services in Marseille, Mark MacGann, Uber’s chief lobbyist in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, turned to Uber’s ally in the French cabinet.</p> <p>“I will look at this personally,” Macron texted back. “At this point, let’s stay calm.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/08 Big fish sightings spiking; climate change?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/07/08/big-fish-warm-waters-climate-change/
GIST	<p>Big fish sightings appear to have spiked around the world: In the last year-and-a-half, there have been reports of a 661-pound, record-breaking stingray in Cambodia, a 240-pound lake sturgeon outside Detroit and a 100-pound opah fish on the Oregon coast. As these fish show up in unexpected places, experts say climate change may be helping drive this trend.</p> <p>The fish “aren’t growing larger, they are relocating to new environments,” said Francisco Werner, director of scientific programs at National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries.</p> <p>As waters warm — fueled by oceans absorbing more than 90 percent of the excess heat from global warming — fish are relocating. Werner’s work has shown that there is a prevailing pattern to these shifts, that fish populations are shifting toward the poles and cooler waters.</p> <p>They are “trying to maintain some optimum temperatures and preferred temperature ranges that they like,” he said.</p> <p>Last year, a huge opah fish — the kind typically found in tropical waters — washed up on the north Oregon coast. And Tiffany Boothe, assistant manager at an aquarium in the small beach community of Seaside, said it wasn’t the first time southern, warm-water fish had shown up in Oregon.</p> <p>On the other coast, drastic temperature shifts in waters have meant changing conditions for fish there. In the Gulf of Maine, for example, waters have warmed five times faster than the global average for the past 15 years, said Kathy Mills, a researcher at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. As a result, Maine’s waters may offer a glimpse into future fish movement as planetary warming continues. Mills said the cod fishery “really supported the first fisheries in the country, and we have seen these populations decline as waters warm.”</p> <p>“They just aren’t able to be as productive and continue producing as many young and have those be as viable and survive to adulthood as they could under cooler temperature conditions,” Mills said.</p>

	<p>In contrast to the dwindling cod, Mills notes that “American lobster now is experiencing temperatures that are really conducive for high population productivity.”</p> <p>As a result, lobster has boosted Maine’s economy as the highest value single species fishery in the country. But if warming trends continue, they may move on.</p> <p>Even as Maine experiences a lobster boom, Mills worries about the species’ future with unchecked global warming.</p> <p>“The question now is whether we’re seeing temperatures move into or beyond thresholds where they’re no longer conducive to this high productivity of American lobster,” she said. It “raises questions about what the future of the fishery might look like.”</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	07/11 Churches vandalized, possible arson fires
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/11/us/maryland-churches-fire-arson-vandalism/index.html
GIST	<p>Three churches located on the same road in Maryland, just outside Washington, DC, were vandalized over the weekend, and authorities are investigating fires set at two of the churches as arson.</p> <p>“These churches are within a few mile radius of each other,” said Pete Piringer, spokesperson for the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service. “We can’t conclusively say right now that they are connected, but they are all very similar.”</p> <p>At around 1:30 a.m. on Saturday, a fire was set at North Bethesda United Methodist Church on Old Georgetown Rd. in Bethesda, Maryland, Piringer told CNN, yet the damage was minimal.</p> <p>An investigator leaving the church grounds then came across debris authorities suspect came from the nearby Wildwood Baptist Church, Piringer said, including a couple of damaged headstones and wood material on the road.</p> <p>Wildwood Baptist was not set on fire, but the material found appeared to have been the result of vandalism, according to Piringer.</p> <p>A spokesperson from North Bethesda United Methodist confirmed the building had damage caused by fire to the fellowship hall, kitchen and a hallway.</p> <p>“We are saddened by these destructive acts, and we feel tinges of the heartache and fear that arise in communities of all types when a sacred space is desecrated. We cannot know the hurt of the person or people who vandalized churches in our neighborhood, and so we lift their hurt and our own hurt up to God,” Rev. Kara Scroggins, senior pastor of the church, said in a statement provided to CNN.</p> <p>About 24 hours later, at approximately 2 a.m. Sunday, the fire and rescue service was called to St. Jane Frances de Chantal Parish located less than two miles away from the other churches. First responders observed a fire in the church’s sanctuary, which damaged several pews but was quickly extinguished, Piringer said, adding investigators believe the fire was set intentionally.</p> <p>In remarks livestreamed Sunday, Rev. Samuel Giese informed the St. Jane Frances de Chantal congregation their parish had been vandalized overnight. The video on YouTube also contained footage from inside the church of the overnight fire.</p>

	<p>“People broke in, they overturned statues, tore down the stations of the cross, desecrated the tabernacle, and tried to set the church on fire,” Giese said.</p> <p>In a statement to CNN, Wildwood Baptist Church said “the damage done to our church was limited to the desecration of the graveyard adjacent to the church. Our prayers and concern are for those whose hearts are so vile to attack churches and graveyards.”</p> <p>Authorities did not comment on a potential motive amid the ongoing investigation.</p> <p>CNN has reached out to Montgomery County police, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington, St. Jane Frances de Chantal Parish and the North Bethesda United Methodist Church for comment.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/11 Kansas City shooting: 1 dead, 5 wounded
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/trending/officer-involved-shooting-reported-kansas-city-missouri/PTGAAPGF3FDL7HMOQZMN3MDMY/
GIST	<p>KANSAS CITY, Mo. — At least one person is dead and five others are hurt after gunfire erupted late Sunday outside a bar in Kansas City, Missouri, authorities said.</p> <p><i>Here are the latest updates:</i></p> <p>Update 5:52 a.m. EDT July 11: According to KSHB-TV and KMBC-TV, a Missouri State Highway Patrol spokesman said a disturbance broke out about 11 p.m. at Westport Ale House on Broadway Boulevard in Westport. The disturbance continued outside the bar, where shots were fired, the spokesman said.</p> <p>Three Kansas City police officers, who were off-duty and providing security at the bar, then fired back, the spokesman said.</p> <p>Authorities said one person was killed and five others were wounded in the gunfire, the news outlets reported.</p> <p>It wasn’t clear whether the off-duty officers’ gunfire struck anyone, authorities said. No further details were immediately available.</p> <p>Original report: At least five ambulances responded to a Missouri bar late Sunday following reports of an officer-involved shooting in Kansas City, multiple news outlets are reporting.</p> <p>According to WDAF-TV and KSHB-TV, the incident occurred about 11:30 p.m. near the intersection of West 41st Street and Broadway Boulevard in Westport. It wasn’t immediately clear what prompted the shooting, which involved Kansas City police, the outlets reported.</p> <p>Officials have not said whether anyone was injured in the shooting, WDAF reported.</p> <p>The Missouri State Highway Patrol also is investigating, according to the news outlets.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Man beaten at Bellevue Transit Center
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/man-assaulted-critically-injured-at-bellevue-transit-center/
GIST	<p>A 25-year-old man attacked a 63-year-old man early Sunday at the Bellevue Transit Center, according to the Bellevue Police Department.</p> <p>The 63-year-old was severely beaten, critically injured and taken to Harborview Medical Center, said Meeghan Black, spokesperson for the police department. Officers do not yet know what motivated the attack, but it appears to be isolated, she added.</p>

	<p>A witness waiting for a ride reported the assault to police. Police and paramedics arrived within minutes and treated the 63-year-old on site before taking him to the hospital.</p> <p>Officers found the 25-year-old two hours after the attack, which happened shortly after midnight, a news release from the department said. They arrested him near an overpass a few blocks from the Bellevue bus station, at 10850 N.E. Sixth Street, Black said.</p> <p>They closed the transit center briefly during the investigation. It has since reopened.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/10 Seattle PD: dozens of shots fired at party
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/dozens-of-shots-fired-at-party-in-lake-city-one-person-arrested
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Seattle Police say one person is in custody and one person was injured following a dispute at a house party that led to dozens of shots being fired.</p> <p>Officers responded to the shooting in the 11300 block of Lake City Way NE just after midnight Sunday.</p> <p>According to police, a dispute broke out at a party and around 30 shots were fired. Police say there were multiple shooters.</p> <p>One person was shot and taken to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. Police say they arrested one of the shooters for investigation of assault.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/09 Exposure of China's 'bought wives'
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-exposure-of-chinas-bought-wives-11657339260
GIST	<p>The one-minute video clip started circulating on Chinese social media last winter. A woman is shown in a shed with no door, dressed in a thin sweater. She is chained by the neck.</p> <p>The footage set off a storm of social-media outrage: How in today's China could a human being be treated this way? Many suspected she must be a "bought wife," a reference to a long-held but illegal practice to help rural men find brides—often involving human traffickers who lure or abduct poor women from remote regions.</p> <p>The furor in turn has set off a broader debate over how Chinese women are treated. The Communist leadership prides itself on promoting gender equality and officials frequently repeat a Mao Zedong quote: "Women hold up half the sky." But many educated, urban Chinese women found in the chained woman's misfortune a lens on their own roles in society.</p> <p>Much of the initial anger had to do with the level of tolerance that at first led local officials to shrug off questions about the chained woman. Authorities in Xuzhou, in the southeastern Jiangsu province, at first denied she was a trafficking victim: She "lived apart from her family," they said, because she was mentally ill and sometimes violent.</p> <p>Later they confirmed the public's suspicions. She had been sold as a bride not once, but twice, and had eight children. She was brought by traffickers from a poor corner of Yunnan province in southern China inhabited by members of the Lisu minority, whose names are often based on plants or animals. Authorities identified her as Xiaohuamei, a name that means Little Plum Blossom.</p> <p>With the disclosures, her current husband was arrested and she was hospitalized. Jiangsu provincial authorities said in February that she was diagnosed with schizophrenia, and that her condition improved in the hospital but that she still wasn't able to communicate; they have made no further comment.</p>

Protest in China does not gather momentum often. In a country with little tolerance for street demonstrations, social media provides an outlet for discontent, but under tight controls; the government has battled any sign of a broader feminist awakening from this or other incidents, throwing feminist activists in jail or deleting their social-media accounts. Still, the outpouring over the chained woman catapulted the issue of bride-buying to the level of national soul searching.

For weeks and then months, images from the video have dominated China's social media. The groundswell was reminiscent of the global #MeToo movement, which had been comparatively muted in China. In February it stole attention from the Beijing Winter Olympics. Over time it inspired poems, graffiti, memes and Andy Warhol-style portraits online.

Complaints have spread to unexpected quarters of society. An equipment mechanic in Tianjin, 370 miles away, said he called police in the woman's town several times to plead for justice on her behalf after seeing the video. "Jiangsu in the year of 2022 shouldn't still be a society of slavery," he said. State-affiliated commentators also chimed in. "Isn't it suspected of breaking laws to force a mentally ill person to give birth, to have so many babies, to use her as a reproductive tool?" asked Hu Xijin, a columnist and former editor in chief of the nationalist Global Times newspaper, on the Weibo social-media platform.

Months after the footage emerged, a national campaign is under way to track down and rescue women unwillingly sold into marriage. Officials in Xuzhou have adopted a new tone, saying they felt deeply ashamed to the point of not being able to eat or sleep. Officials in Hebei province rescued 11 trafficking victims in a crackdown, while officials in Jiangsu and other areas have gone door to door to see if other women are in similar situations. National legislators are working on making it illegal to turn a blind eye to signs someone is a trafficking victim. Any traffickers were given until June 30 to turn themselves in return for leniency. On July 3, the Ministry of Public Security said the authorities have set up more than 5,000 stations to collect blood samples from victims of trafficking and from family members who have reported missing persons.

The outpouring has forced officials to acknowledge the continued trauma of bride-buying—as well as the level of tolerance that has persisted around it, partly because it helped assuage a surplus of unmarried men.

Bride buying is rooted in China's skewed gender ratio, the result of a preference for sons in a society where men traditionally inherit a family's assets. Under China's one-child policy, baby girls were more often targeted for abortion or, in the more distant past, sometimes left to die after birth. That left a surplus of men. Many bachelors have enlisted matchmakers, some of whom were traffickers, to find a wife.

Coercing a woman into marriage has long been against the law in China, but paying money for a wife didn't become a criminal offense until 1997. Many local officials adopted a "one-eye-open, one-eye closed" attitude to evidence of bride trafficking, driven by fears of unrest if a lot of men couldn't find wives. Transactions that turned abducted women into brides were often regarded as legitimate because they were consistent with existing traditions such as the paying of dowries.

One woman said that in 1987, when she was 18 years old, a man from central China came to her village in Yunnan and offered her brother 2,500 yuan for her, or a little less than \$400. Her brother told her to go with the man, she said, and threatened to kill her if she didn't. In her new village in Anhui province, nearly 2,000 miles away, locals called her a "southern barbarian"—a term she learned to detest—and her husband became abusive. "He told me that I was different, that I was bought," she said. "Sometimes I just wanted to die." After having two sons, the couple divorced in 2008. Now 53, she works at a small factory in a coastal city, owns an apartment and says she finally feels like a full citizen again.

The pain of bride trafficking often reverberates through generations. One woman in Shenzhen said she didn't know as a child why her mother always seemed so sad. It wasn't till she was in high school that she learned her mother had run away from a man she was sold to, leaving behind a daughter. The woman said her mother had worked as an elementary-school teacher in western China in the 1980s when a man lured her away with promises of a higher-paying job. Instead she was sold as a bride. In 2008, the woman said, her mother called her crying, saying she had tried to file a report as a human-trafficking victim but it

hadn't been accepted. The next phone call the woman received was from police, saying her mother was found dead in a river.

Even when trafficked women are reunited with their families, it's not easy to turn back the clock. Shanghai resident Mary Cheng said that late last year, police found her sister, who had disappeared from their neighborhood a decade earlier, in Anhui province. Ms. Cheng couldn't believe how much her sister, who has developmental delays, had aged at age 36: She had gray hair and many wrinkles, and had lost several teeth. "My heart ached," said Ms. Cheng. The man who is now her sister's husband said no money had changed hands and that his wife was free to go. But within a month, she returned to Anhui, saying she missed her 9-year-old daughter.

Courts have sometimes been reluctant to grant divorces to women who say they were sold to their husbands. In 2014, a Xuzhou court ruled against the divorce petition of a woman from Sichuan province who said she had been sold to a local man in 1984. The two had four children. "The two parties should treasure many years of bonds between a husband and a wife, support each other and collectively defend the completeness of the family," the court ruling said.

While wife-buying of Chinese women has become much less common, in recent years more brides have come from outside China, including Myanmar and North Korea, according to human-rights organizations.

Feng Yuan, the head of Equality, a Beijing-based feminist advocacy group, said it would be wrong to assume that the level of violence against Chinese women has changed. "But people's awareness is higher," she said. In June, a brutal assault by a group of men on several women at a restaurant in northern China was captured on video. Online, many drew parallels to the chained woman. One commenter asked, "What would happen to the case without the security camera and the internet?"

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HEADLINE	07/09 DOJ: Oath Keeper took explosives to D.C.
SOURCE	https://www.axios.com/2022/07/09/oath-keeper-explosives-jan-6-riot-doj
GIST	<p>A member of the far-right Oath Keepers militia brought explosives to Washington, D.C. ahead of the Jan. 6 deadly insurrection, according to court documents from the Justice Department.</p> <p>Driving the news: The DOJ said that the government seized explosives from Jeremy Brown, an Oath Keeper member from Florida, including "military ordinance grenades" in his vehicle.</p> <p>Details: DOJ prosecutors plan to present this in the September trial of several Oath Keepers. Brown is not part of that trial.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They will argue that this evidence shows that the members charged with seditious conspiracy had the "manner and means" to "advance the goals of the charged conspiracy."• "Indeed, possessing, transporting, and storing various weapons around the Washington, D.C., area was part and parcel to organizing and executing" the riot. <p>Catch up fast: Stewart Rhodes, a founder and leader of the Oath Keepers, and eight other militia members were arrested and charged for their role in organizing the Jan. 6 insurrection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An indictment amended this week says that "Rhodes and certain conspirators ... coordinated travel across the country to enter Washington, D.C., equipped themselves with a variety of weapons, donned combat and tactical gear, and were prepared to answer Rhodes' call to take up arms at Rhodes' direction."
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HEADLINE	07/10 South Africa tavern shootings: 21 killed
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/10/world/africa/south-africa-shooting-soweto.html
GIST	JOHANNESBURG — At least 21 people were killed over the weekend as gunmen opened fire on three taverns in South Africa, in what the police described as "random" shootings.

Early Sunday morning in Soweto, in Johannesburg, a group of men armed with rifles and automatic handguns stormed a busy tavern in the Nomzamo shantytown, in the city's Orlando East neighborhood, said Col. Dimakatso Sello, a spokeswoman for the police.

The men opened fire around half an hour after midnight in what appeared to be a random shooting, Colonel Sello said, killing 12 people on the scene and injuring 23. Three more people later died at a hospital, the police said. They said that those killed were between the ages of 19 and 35.

The gunmen fled the scene, and no arrests have been made, the police said. Later Sunday morning, people gathered outside the tavern as the police removed bodies from the building.

Only hours before the attack in Soweto, gunmen in Pietermaritzburg, a city about 300 miles southeast of Johannesburg in KwaZulu-Natal Province, killed at least four people and injured at least eight in a shooting in a tavern in Sweetwaters, an area on the outskirts of the city, the police said.

There was no evidence that the two attacks were linked, said Lt.-Col. Nqobile Gwala, a spokeswoman for the police.

Around 8:30 p.m. Saturday, the police said, two men entered the Sweetwaters tavern and started firing at random before fleeing the scene.

Two people died at the tavern and two others at a nearby hospital, the police said, adding that those killed were between the ages of 30 and 45. Eight other people were also taken to a hospital.

In yet another tavern shooting over the weekend, gunmen killed two people and injured four on Friday night in the Katlehong township, more than 25 miles east of Soweto. The police said that four men entered the establishment, at least one armed with a pistol, and started shooting randomly. The police have not said whether the two attacks in the Johannesburg area were connected, but they said they had launched a manhunt for the gunmen.

The three separate attacks, hundreds of miles apart, have brought into sharp focus South Africa's high rate of crime and gun violence. [According to police statistics](#), the country recorded 5,760 murders last year, or 9.5 murders per 100,000 people, a 66 percent increase from the previous year. The police station serving the Sweetwaters community has the second highest number of murders reported in the country, according to the official statistics.

President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa condemned the killings, describing them as "unacceptable and worrying."

Only two weeks ago, [21 teenagers mysteriously died](#) during a night out in the coastal city of East London, about 360 miles southwest of Pietermaritzburg. The cause of their deaths is still unknown, but officials have ruled out a stampede. The episode set off a [national conversation about the need for stricter regulation](#) of taverns in South Africa's townships.

These drinking holes, often in residential areas, are a legacy of shebeens from the apartheid era, when Black South Africans were not allowed to enter segregated bars. These shebeens became sites of violence and risky behavior, with little oversight, a culture that continues to day, according to a [2018 World Health Organization report](#).

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HEADLINE	07/10 Questions: parents' role in mass shootings
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/10/us/highland-park-shooting-parents.html
GIST	HIGHLAND PARK, Ill. — Days after a gunman opened fire at a Fourth of July parade here, Alberto Fuentes arrived at a downtown memorial for the victims, asking himself a question now haunting many in this shattered Chicago suburb: Could the 21-year-old suspect's parents have prevented any of this?

“The kid had a problem,” Mr. Fuentes, 40, said. “I have kids, too, and if I see something, I have a responsibility. The parents had a responsibility to do something.”

Millions of American parents now worry about their children becoming victims of a mass shooting. But a different nightmare exists for the tiny but growing cluster of parents whose children, nearly always sons, pull the trigger.

Some had spent months or years before attacks worrying about their sons’ mental health and seeking help in vain. But most do not alert the authorities before an attack, researchers say, and those parents can face scorn and accusations they ignored warning signs or even enabled attacks by allowing their sons to get ahold of deadly weapons.

Afterward, some parents change their names and leave town. A handful tell their stories to prevent future attacks. Others try to vanish through their silence.

“It’s terrifying enough to think you might be the victim of some random piece of violence,” said Andrew Solomon, an author who interviewed parents of the gunmen who attacked Columbine High School and Sandy Hook Elementary. “But to think you might be called out for not knowing, that your child had caused this, is also a terrible fate.”

The parents of the man who is accused in the Highland Park shooting have come under scrutiny in the wake of the attack that killed seven people and left many more wounded. Law enforcement officials released records detailing that the father sponsored his son for a firearms license in 2019 despite incidents in which his son was said to have attempted suicide with a machete and drew police to his home because, officers were told, he threatened to “kill everyone.” The father has said he did not do anything wrong and was shocked by what had taken place.

As [more of the country’s deadliest mass shootings](#) are carried out by killers in their teens and early 20s, prosecutors and researchers are focusing on parents to unravel how their sons are radicalized, what interventions might have stopped them and whether parents who disregard obvious warnings or provide guns to their children should be held [criminally responsible](#). According to data from [the Violence Project](#), more than 50 people under the age of 25 have killed at least four people in a public setting since 1966. That data excludes mass killings that are attributed to gang activity, robberies or other underlying crimes.

Parents are sometimes charged with negligence or manslaughter after a child accidentally shoots themselves or someone else with an improperly stored gun. It is far rarer for parents to be charged after their children carry out a shooting spree.

But a handful of recent cases suggests that may be changing, as law enforcement looks for new ways to combat a surge in mass shootings.

“It’s some uncharted territory of how much responsibility parents are going to be held for their kids’ behavior,” said Frank Kaminski, the police chief in Park Ridge, Ill., another Chicago suburb. He added: “I’m all for holding everyone accountable for guns.”

When a 15-year-old in Michigan was accused of slaughtering four classmates last year, his parents were charged with involuntary manslaughter; they have pleaded not guilty. And after a 29-year-old man went on a [killing spree at a Waffle House](#) in Nashville in 2018, the man’s father, an Illinois resident, was charged in that state with illegally providing the gun used at the restaurant.

Officials said the Waffle House gunman had been treated for mental health problems and later lost his authorization to own guns in Illinois. When that happened, they said, he transferred possession of the guns to his father. When the son moved away, the authorities said, the father [returned a rifle to him](#), which they said was a crime.

But Michael Doubet, a lawyer for Jeffrey Reinking, the father of the Waffle House gunman, said a distinction must be drawn between the responsibilities of the parents of a juvenile offender and of the parents of someone who carries out a mass shooting as a legal adult. Mr. Reinking was [convicted](#) of unlawful delivery of a firearm and is awaiting sentencing.

“When people are over the age of 18, they’re beyond their parents’ control,” Mr. Doubet said.

Kevin Johnson, a prosecutor in that case, said that family members and friends need “to have the courage and common sense to follow through and make the appropriate report to the authorities” if they fear someone they know is heading toward violence.

He added: “Unless and until they are willing to do that, there is no way that authorities can step in and assist and perhaps prevent a tragedy.”

Researchers say some parents of troubled children do not always know where to turn for help. They hesitate to call the police about their sons’ private mental health struggles, before they turn violent, for fear of the lasting effect on their child’s record.

Investigators found deep denial in a case like the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting in 2012. A detailed state [report](#) found the 20-year-old gunman’s mother [did not heed](#) medical experts’ calls to get mental health treatment for him in the years before the shooting and did not restrict his access to guns as his mental health condition deteriorated. The mother, Nancy Lanza, was one of 27 people her son killed.

The question of parental responsibility is especially complicated for gunmen who occupy a hazy space between childhood and adulthood. They are often still tethered to home but legally adults, and they are often able to pass background checks and buy powerful firearms.

In online messages that appear to have been written by the 18-year-old charged with killing 10 people in a racist massacre at a Buffalo supermarket in May, the writer fretted that his mother would find the guns he had stashed inside his bedroom at his parents’ house. The same month, the gunman in Uvalde, Texas, also 18, had been living with his grandparents and shot his grandmother in the face before driving to the elementary school where he killed 19 children and two adults.

The suspect in the Highland Park massacre, Robert E. Crimo III, had lived with his father, Robert Crimo Jr., for the past six months, and with his mother, Denise Pesina, before that, a family lawyer said. After the attack, the police said, he fled town in his mother’s car before being arrested. He was charged with murder and ordered held without bail.

Neither of the accused gunman’s parents has been charged with any crime. The authorities have given noncommittal answers to questions about whether they are investigating the elder Mr. Crimo, saying that “everything is on the table.” A public defender representing the son declined to comment about the case against his client or about whether the parents had any culpability. George Gomez, a lawyer representing the elder Mr. Crimo and Ms. Pesina, said that they declined to be interviewed for this article.

In recent media interviews, the elder Mr. Crimo said he had no involvement in the shooting and no idea what his son might have been planning.

He defended his decision to sponsor his son’s application for a gun owner’s license in 2019, saying he was following the legal process Illinois had created for anyone under 21 to acquire a Firearm Owner’s Identification Card. Given the father’s sponsorship, the State Police said they had no legal basis to deny the son’s application.

“I filled out the consent form to allow my son to go through the process — they do background checks, whatever that entails,” Mr. Crimo said in an interview with ABC News.

The State Police said that the document that the elder Mr. Crimo signed included a provision that said he “shall be liable for any damages resulting from the minor applicant’s use of firearms or firearm ammunition.”

The younger Mr. Crimo bought the high-powered rifle that police said he used in the parade attack before his 21st birthday, when he would have become able to apply for a license without a sponsorship. He was 21 at the time of the shooting, which the police said he carried out after he climbed to a rooftop in downtown Highland Park during the parade and sprayed more than 80 bullets into the crowd.

Before the attack, the father was well-known in the community, operating delis in town and running unsuccessfully for mayor. His wife, Ms. Pesina, ran a natural-healing business.

The Crimo family’s home life could be chaotic. In August 2002, just before the suspect’s second birthday, police officers found the toddler alone in a car in a Toys “R” Us parking lot. Prosecutors charged his mother, Ms. Pesina, whom they said left him alone for about 27 minutes with the windows rolled up while it was 79 degrees outside. Court records show that Ms. Pesina reached an agreement and spent a year on court supervision, which she completed. No judgment was entered in the misdemeanor child endangerment case, records show.

The suspect’s parents sometimes argued loudly, and officers made several visits to the home during a turbulent period about a decade ago to intercede in minor disputes, police records show.

Along the way, there were signs that their son was struggling. He dropped out of Highland Park High School in 2016, shortly before the start of his sophomore year, officials said, and never graduated from that school.

“It was like he was invisible,” said Kate Kramer, 21, who knew him in high school.

Some 80 percent of gunmen in mass shootings show a marked change in behavior before they attack, such as depression, isolation or quitting school or work, said Jillian Peterson, a co-founder of the Violence Project, a national database of mass shootings.

“They did know something was wrong,” she said of many gunmen’s parents. “But we don’t think that a person in our lives could be a person who could do this.”

Researchers say that friends, classmates and online contacts of gunmen often first notice a looming threat. Even if they report it, that is no guarantee of stopping an attack. Before a 19-year-old gunman killed 17 people at a high school in Parkland, Fla., there were multiple tips to law-enforcement agencies warning that he was armed and might shoot up a school.

In April 2014, a California mother raised warnings that brought sheriff’s deputies to the apartment of her 22-year-old son, who was living in Isla Vista, Calif. The authorities interviewed him, but he did not meet the strict requirements for involuntary hospitalization, said Jeffrey W. Swanson, a sociologist at Duke University who studies gun violence prevention.

The following month, the 22-year-old killed six people and himself. In the aftermath, the gunman’s father, Peter Rodger, sat down with Richard Martinez, whose son Christopher was among the victims. Mr. Martinez said he loaded up his car with artwork, trophies, writings and other keepsakes of his athletic son, who loved driving with the sunroof open and wind blowing.

Mr. Martinez, who has since become an outspoken supporter of stricter gun laws, said he believed some parents of gunmen should be held criminally responsible if they did not try to prevent an attack, or made it possible for their children to arm themselves.

“They just wanted me to tell them about Chris. And that’s what I did,” Mr. Martinez said, recalling the meeting with the other father. “We never talked about his son.”

HEADLINE	07/10 Uvalde: taunting gunman, 78min. of terror
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/10/us/uvalde-injured-teacher-reyes.html
GIST	<p>UVALDE, Texas — The first shots came from the hallway outside the classroom. Arnulfo Reyes, a fourth-grade teacher at Robb Elementary School, quickly remembered the active shooter training he had rehearsed so many times and told his 11 students to lie under their desks and “act like you are asleep.”</p> <p>A black shadow appeared at one of the classroom doors and a plume of fire flared from the tip of what looked like a rifle. Mr. Reyes felt a bullet piercing his arm, tearing off a chunk of flesh and bone. Then the gunman turned on the children. The rampage was so brutal and so swift, the teacher said, that he did not hear a single whimper from them as their bodies were shredded.</p> <p>Mr. Reyes lay in a pool of his own blood for what seemed like an eternity until he heard police officers gathering in the hallway just outside the classroom door. His students lay silent, dead or dying; a few other children in an adjoining classroom were still alive, faintly calling for help. The officers will burst through and save us any minute now, he told himself. But the minutes ticked by, and no rescue came.</p> <p>About a half-hour later, the gunman, sitting near where Mr. Reyes was sprawled on the floor, seemed to be taunting him. He leveled his gun at the teacher’s back and fired again.</p> <p>“I think about it more and more. What could they have done differently?” Mr. Reyes said in an interview recounting the events of May 24, when a mass shooting at the school left 19 students and two teachers dead.</p> <p>He described the agony that victims felt as the police who were gathered in the hallway postponed entering the classrooms where the gunman was holed up — waiting some 78 minutes in a delayed response that a preliminary law enforcement investigation suggests was complicated by a search for a key and a decision to try to protect the lives of the responding officers.</p> <p>“I kept waiting for someone to come,” Mr. Reyes said. “But when I didn’t see anyone coming in, I just thought, nobody’s coming.”</p> <p>More than a month after the tragedy, as Mr. Reyes tries to recover from the severe wounds he suffered, the memories of that day play repeatedly in his mind. The day began with a jovial year-end award ceremony, after which nearly half of Mr. Reyes’s 18 fourth-grade students had gone home with their parents. Eleven stayed because they wanted to watch “The Addams Family” movie.</p> <p>“It was supposed to be an easy day, just before the summer break,” he recalled.</p> <p>Out of nowhere, Mr. Reyes and his students heard what they now know were gunshots coming from the hallway. The powerful blasts sprayed debris into his classroom. “There were pieces of wall flying,” he said.</p> <p>The gunman first entered room 112, which was connected to Mr. Reyes’s classroom through another door. He shot indiscriminately, the police said, fatally wounding two teachers, Irma Garcia and Eva Mireles, and several of their students.</p> <p>Mr. Reyes turned to his students. “All right, we’ve already practiced this. Get under the desks, OK? Just close your eyes and act like you are asleep,” he remembered saying.</p> <p>“I didn’t want them to see anything.”</p> <p>Mr. Reyes does not remember if the gunman entered through the door that connected the two rooms or if he stepped back into the hallway. But the next thing he recalls is seeing a ghostly figure wearing a black hoodie over his head and what looked like a black medical mask that obscured half of his face.</p>

“I just see this shadow and his eyes,” he said.

Then came two sparks from a rifle, aimed at him. “He shot me first,” he said. The impact sent a burning shock through his left arm that felt like hot lava, he said. A large chunk of his forearm was missing.

The gunman quickly turned his rifle on the students, unleashing a rain of fire that was so fast and merciless that it was over almost as soon as it began and there was nothing but silence in the room. “They were probably instantly killed,” Mr. Reyes said, though he said some of them might have died during the long wait. Maybe, he said, they were silent because “they were in shock.”

The first police officers arrived outside the classroom door about three minutes after the gunman entered the school, according to a preliminary timeline. After the initial attack, Mr. Reyes said, he could hear them talking to one another in the hallway just outside.

At one point, he heard one of the officers yell at the gunman: “Come out, we want to talk to you!” The gunman did not answer, though the police have said that two officers suffered grazing wounds when he fired a burst at the classroom door. The chatter from the police went quiet. “You didn’t hear anything anymore,” Mr. Reyes said.

Most of his students were probably beyond saving, Mr. Reyes said. But at least one surviving child in the classroom next door must have heard the officers too, he said, because he heard someone cry for help.

“Officers, come in,” he heard a small voice say. “We are in here.”

For several minutes, the gunman paced around the room, then perched on the teacher’s desk as Mr. Reyes lay sprawled face-down on the floor below. In what he believed was an attempt to taunt him — or to make sure he was dead — the gunman let a cup of water drip from a desk onto Mr. Reyes’s back. The gunman then smeared some of Mr. Reyes’s own blood on the teacher’s face and placed the teacher’s phone, which kept ringing as desperate relatives tried to reach him, on his back.

He seemed to be trying to elicit a reaction, Mr. Reyes said. “He was going to make sure I was dead, too. I mean, he had nothing to lose.”

Some 30 minutes after entering the room, apparently unsure whether Mr. Reyes might still be alive, the gunman shot him a second time, this time in his lower back. Mr. Reyes said he became certain at that point that he would not survive. “I’m not going to make it,” he told himself. “I’m going to bleed out.”

Then he heard the gunman return to room 112. More shots were fired. He later heard the gunman closing the blinds on a window facing the outside.

Mr. Reyes does not remember how much more time passed, but he suddenly heard tables sliding and loud stomps in the room next door. There was more gunfire. Then silence.

A man who was part of a Border Patrol team that had breached the classroom next door and killed the gunman approached Mr. Reyes, urging him to “get up if you can.” When he could not, the agent dragged him by the tip of his pants out of the carnage. “He asked for help carrying me. I was too heavy,” he said, sharing a rare smile.

Another agent, he said, suddenly shouted an expletive. “There’s kids under here!”

A few of them were still alive in the adjoining classroom. The school was suddenly a swarm of police officers, medics, ambulances and, outside, hysterical parents. Mr. Reyes was flown to a hospital in San Antonio, where he underwent several surgeries.

Doctors placed a metal plate about six inches long on his arm for his gaping wound, covering it with a skin graft from his right leg. A pair of drainage bags still collect fluids coming from his lower back and arm. He will not regain full movement in the arm, doctors have told him.

He is back now at his modest home in Uvalde, a city where he has lived since he was a young child. It is decorated with antiques and inspirational signs. “All You Need Is Love,” one of them reads, and: “It Takes A Big Heart To Help Shape Little Minds.”

He had dreamed of becoming a lawyer, he said, but 18 years ago he found his calling as an elementary schoolteacher, the last 10 of them at Robb Elementary.

After a difficult year of teaching remotely because of the pandemic, Mr. Reyes was happy to see his all of his students return to class in 2022. “This year was different, I could just feel it,” he said. “They had a tight bond. They wanted to learn.”

When he thinks about the students who died in his classroom that day, most of them barely 10 years old, he finds himself remembering them not in death, but in life.

There was Rojelio Torres, who had suddenly become serious about learning his multiplication and division. “He was very ambitious. He wanted to be good at everything.”

There was Jose Flores, who lived for lunch and recess and was a “corajudo,” meaning he would get flustered each time he failed to understand a lesson or math problem. “He would shut down and I would tell him, ‘Don’t do that.’ And he did, he learned how to control his frustration.” Josecito, as his family called him, was named to the honor roll for the first time on the day he was killed.

And who could forget Jayce Luevanos? He was the popular class clown who reminded Mr. Reyes of the flamboyant movie character Ace Ventura portrayed by Jim Carrey. Jayce liked to wear a T-shirt with the image of an ice chest that read, “I’m a little bit cooler than you.”

On a recent afternoon, Mr. Reyes sat next to a blue folkloric cross given to him by the mother of Tess Mata, one of the victims, and a block of granite engraved with photos of all the victims. A cousin, Belinda Aguilera, stopped by to check on him. “He’s doing better, thank God,” Ms. Aguilera said as she studied Mr. Reyes, who was sitting alone on a couch.

Ms. Aguilera, who lives near the school, said she was one of the people calling Mr. Reyes’s phone in a panic after hearing several gunshots. “You popped on my head because I knew you were there,” she told him, fighting back tears.

“I’m so sorry,” she said. “I feel like my phone call made him do that to you.”

No, no, Mr. Reyes said, trying to reassure her at a time when practically everyone has lost any sense of assurance. This is not on you, he said.

She didn’t seem convinced. She talked about the long road he had ahead of him. Not just the wounds healing — but everything else. “The pain will never go away,” she said.

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HEADLINE	07/10 Coney Island mass shooting: 5 wounded
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/trending/5-people-wounded-shooting-coney-island-boardwalk/XBIUC7YGWREERPEOGHXEWGSKYQ/
GIST	NEW YORK — Five people were wounded, one critically, in a shooting at New York’s famous Coney Island boardwalk on Sunday, authorities said.

	<p>According to the New York City Police Department, the incident happened at 21st Street and the boardwalk at around 2 a.m. EDT, WABC-TV reported.</p> <p>There was an unsanctioned pop-up party on the beach when the shots rang out, a police spokesperson told WPIX-TV.</p> <p>A 31-year-old man is in critical but stable condition after being shot in the back, the television station reported.</p> <p>The other victims include a 19-year-old man, a 27-year-old woman and a 26-year-old woman, who all were shot in the leg, WPIX reported. A 36-year-old man was shot in the chin, the television station reported.</p> <p>All were in stable condition, police said.</p> <p>It is unclear what led to the shooting, WABC reported. No arrests have been made, police said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/08 Calif. gang members in guilty plea for fraud
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/trending/29-alleged-gang-members-plead-guilty-1m-fraud-scheme-california/S5EOX454UREWRBC3PWAHFWZUFA/
GIST	<p>Twenty-nine people associated with criminal street gangs in California face a combined 86 years in prison after pleading guilty to a \$1 million fraud scheme, prosecutors said Friday.</p> <p>In a news release, California Attorney General Rob Bonta said the gangs, known as the Bully Boys and the CoCo Boys, allegedly defrauded victims in California by hacking credit card terminals and merchant accounts of dozens of medical and dental businesses.</p> <p>Toni Coffman, named by prosecutors as the leader of the scheme, received 13 years and eight months in prison and was ordered to pay \$861,000 in restitution, the Los Angeles Times reported.</p> <p>“Criminal activity targeting merchants and consumers not only takes a financial toll on communities, but it endangers public safety,” Bonta said in a statement. “This sentencing should send a powerful message: Criminal activity will not be tolerated in our state and we will hold those participating in illegal activities accountable.”</p> <p>Law enforcement officials alleged that members of the two gangs worked together to burglarize businesses, the Times reported. Members used the terminals to process returns, placing their value onto a debit card that the suspects took, according to the newspaper.</p> <p>Prosecutors said the defendants stole more than \$1 million across 13 counties in Northern California, according to the news release.</p> <p>The investigation began in February 2016 after similarities were discovered at businesses in Northern California, and authorities tied them to the Bully Boys and the CoCo Boys, the news release stated.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/09 Sexual abuse of teens in JRTOC program
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/09/us/sexual-abuse-jrotc.html
GIST	PICAYUNE, Miss. — With the rifle skills she honed in the Mississippi backwoods, Victoria Bauer had a path to escape the trap of drugs and dead-end jobs she saw most everywhere around her. Her future was in the Marines, she decided, and she had an idea about how to get there.

Across the way from her freshman algebra class, Bauer approached Steve Hardin, the retired Navy intelligence officer who guided the high school's Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, a leadership program sponsored by the U.S. military at high schools across the country. He welcomed her into the fold, she said.

Soon, her 45-year-old JROTC instructor was messaging her on Snapchat late into the night, telling her that it would "drive the guys crazy" if she wore a "small bikini" during the trip to their next out-of-state shooting competition. Then one night in 2015 as he drove her home from rifle practice, she told investigators, Hardin pushed his hand into her pants and penetrated her with his fingers — the start of what she said was months of sexual assaults. Bauer, who was 15 at the time, feared that resisting him would jeopardize her shot at advancement through the JROTC ranks or a military career.

"I gave all the body-language signals that I didn't want it," Bauer said. "I didn't feel like I had a choice."

For more than a century, the JROTC program has sought to instill U.S. military values in American teenagers, with classes in thousands of public high schools that provide training in marksmanship, life skills, hierarchical discipline and military history.

But a New York Times investigation — which included an examination of thousands of court documents, investigative files and other records obtained through more than 150 public disclosure requests — has found that the program has repeatedly become a place where retired military officers prey on their teenage students.

In the past five years, the Times found, at least 33 JROTC instructors have been criminally charged with sexual misconduct involving students, far higher than the rate of civilian high school teachers in jurisdictions examined by the Times. Many others have been accused of misconduct but never charged.

The senior military veterans who make up the JROTC ranks are certified by the military but deploy to high school classrooms with little oversight and scant training for the actual work of being a teacher. Many states do not require JROTC instructors to have a college degree or a teaching certificate. Schools are expected to monitor the instructors and investigate complaints, but they have struggled to adequately oversee a program that largely operates on the fringes of their campuses.

Victims have reported sexual assaults in classrooms and supply closets, during field trips or on late-night rides home, sometimes committed after instructors plied students with alcohol or drugs. One former student said her instructor told her that sexual submission was expected of women in the military. A recent cadet in Tennessee said her JROTC instructor warned that he had the skills to kill her without a trace if she told anyone about their sexual encounters. In Missouri, a student said she was forced to kneel at her instructor's bedside, blindfolded, with a gun to her head.

The Times interviewed 13 victims, many of whom had strikingly similar stories: They were teenagers who came from disadvantaged backgrounds or who otherwise saw the military as a pathway to a promising future, then found that the instructors who fashioned themselves as mentors exploited their positions to manipulate and abuse.

JROTC leaders declined requests for interviews but pointed to research indicating that the program had a positive effect on school attendance and graduation rates. The U.S. Army Cadet Command, which sponsors the largest JROTC program, said in a statement that its instructors went through a "strenuous" vetting process and that any allegations of misconduct were investigated, typically by the school districts that hired the JROTC instructors as civilian employees.

Founded during World War I, the JROTC program has grown to serve a half-million teenagers each year. Its instructors are retired officers or noncommissioned officers.

For the military, which has struggled to meet its recruiting goals in an all-volunteer Army, JROTC has also been seen as a potentially important recruiting tool; students from high schools with JROTC programs are more than twice as likely to enlist after graduation, according to the Army Cadet Command.

The program targets schools with high populations of low-income students. Across the country, majority-minority schools are nearly three times as likely as majority-white schools to have a JROTC program, according to a Times analysis.

The nature of the program offers instructors an unusual level of access to the children they mentor, according to interviews with former students and instructors. It often operates with its own classrooms and facilities, and students frequently are asked to participate in after-school, weekend and out-of-state activities, where instructors sometimes violate district rules by communicating with students on personal cellphones or driving them in their own vehicles.

The weak oversight has allowed some instructors to engage in repeated misconduct. At least seven of those who have been criminally charged had already been flagged for previous allegations of misconduct but were allowed to stay on the job.

Many of the instructors charged with sexual misconduct have pleaded guilty, although Hardin contested the sexual battery charges against him and eventually entered a no-contest plea to an unrelated charge that did not involve sexual misconduct but effectively barred him from working as a teacher. None of the instructors connected with the abuse described in this article or their lawyers agreed to be interviewed.

“There’s so much faith and confidence and trust that goes into these instructor positions,” said Joe Williams, a former Marine gunnery sergeant who worked as a JROTC instructor in Mississippi and Kansas for six years, and who was the first to raise concerns about Hardin with school administrators. “We’ve got these individuals who use that trust as a cloak.”

‘I felt trapped’

When she came forward with allegations against her Air Force JROTC instructor in Charlotte, North Carolina, Dominique Mixon wondered whether anyone would believe her.

The instructor, Brad Gibson, had a catalog of medals and ribbons earned over 24 years of service. After retiring from active duty, he was hired to lead the military program at his alma mater, Independence High School.

Mixon had joined JROTC as a freshman, hoping to go all four years and pursue a possible career in the Air Force. Gibson, then 44, had at first been a friendly mentor, but at times became flirtatious, Mixon told investigators in 2010.

Then, as she was working on an assignment alone at the back of the JROTC complex one day, she said, he came up next to her and began rubbing her thigh. He next moved his hand up her shirt, kissed her neck and licked her ears, Mixon reported.

She reported the incident within days to a teacher, who referred her to a campus police officer. But her report went nowhere.

A school administrator told police investigators that Gibson had previously been counseled for “borderline inappropriate behavior with his female students,” records say, but he was allowed to continue leading the JROTC program.

It was Mixon who was pushed out of the program.

“I felt trapped,” Mixon said. “I felt alone in a corner. I felt like it was just me, myself and I.”

Eight years later, long after she had graduated, Mixon got a call from a Charlotte police officer: A 16-year-old student had filed a new report about Gibson.

The 2018 allegations led authorities to reopen Mixon’s case. Two years ago, Gibson pleaded guilty to indecent liberties with both girls. He was sentenced to five years of probation and required to register as a sex offender.

The school district declined to comment about the case, citing personnel confidentiality. Gibson did not respond to a message seeking comment.

Records released under public disclosure laws show cases across the country in which JROTC instructors who wound up being criminally charged had been the subject of complaints from students in the past, including in Chicago, Casa Grande, Arizona, and Mandeville, Louisiana.

In the case of Bauer, other concerns about Hardin’s conduct had emerged months before she came forward.

Williams, the JROTC instructor who reported him, recalled that Hardin had made a lewd comment to him about a student in a bikini. Then, when some students came to him with a report that they had seen several concerning text messages that Hardin had sent to a female student, Williams said, he brought the issue to school administrators.

But he said he faced intense blowback.

School officials did not respond to requests to discuss the case. But court records show that a police investigation ensued. Bauer initially defended him, saying in a recent interview that she did not disclose her encounters with Hardin at the time because she feared she would be ostracized.

Hardin was not charged at the time, and wound up applying for a new role at a JROTC program two hours away from Picayune.

He got the job.

Obedience comes first

In JROTC classrooms, instructors are not just teachers. They are superior officers, and students are taught to follow the chain of command.

“Obedience is the first lesson every military person must learn,” one of the program’s textbooks says.

Abuse victims said the power dynamics in the program made it more difficult to resist sexual assaults.

With at least 33 instructors charged with teacher-student sexual crimes in the past five years, the JROTC program has recorded one arrest for every 232 instructor positions. There is no national tracking system for educator abuse, but the Times reviewed arrest information for high school teachers released by three of the nation’s largest school districts — Miami-Dade County, Florida, Hillsborough County, Florida, and Los Angeles — along with five years of disciplinary records in Pennsylvania, which proactively monitors for teacher arrests.

Compared with each of those jurisdictions, the JROTC program recorded teacher-student sexual misconduct charges much more often — 68% higher than the next highest case rate.

No prison time

Bauer said that Hardin continued to pursue sexual encounters with her for several months after he transferred to the new job at another school district. He would ask her to meet, she said, and gradually she began to realize that she no longer needed to respond.

She eventually told her mother, and then police. Hardin was charged in 2017 with six counts of sexual battery.

He eventually pleaded no contest to a lesser crime, contributing to the abuse or neglect of a child, in which he did not admit any sexual misconduct but said he had failed to notify authorities about unrelated possible abuse or neglect that Bauer suffered at home. One judge rejected the plea arrangement. A second judge also balked. Defense lawyers eventually won a hearing before a third judge, who accepted the deal.

Hal Kittrell, the district attorney in the case, said prosecutors always believed Bauer but had to consider the likelihood of winning the case.

Prosecutors agreed to the plea because it gave Hardin a felony record and barred him from working as a teacher, Kittrell said.

Hardin declined an interview but emphasized in a brief conversation that the original charges against him had been dropped.

Bauer said the experience forever changed her view of men, the justice system, schools and the military.

“The people who are supposed to be out protecting our country, do they really protect their own people?” Bauer said.

She never joined the Marines.

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HEADLINE	07/09 Arrests: record breaking meth seizure
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/arrested-5000-pounds-methamphetamine-discovered-record-breaking-seizure/story?id=86513887
GIST	<p>Four men have been arrested and charged with federal drug trafficking offenses after an estimated record-breaking two-and-a-half tons of methamphetamine was seized from a box truck that had just crossed the border between the United States and Mexico.</p> <p>The incident occurred on Thursday, July 7, in National City, California, at approximately 4:55 p.m. when the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of California said a commercial 20-foot box truck reportedly crossed into the United States through the Otay Mesa Commercial Port of Entry.</p> <p>“Law enforcement surveilled the box truck as it travelled to Hoover and 30th Street, in National City,” the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of California said in their statement. “Once there, agents observed the defendants unloading dozens of cardboard boxes from the box truck and loading them into a Dodge van.”</p> <p>The four men -- all from Tijuana, Mexico, and ranging in ages from 37 to 44 -- were apprehended and taken into custody. Upon further investigation, authorities said they discovered 148 bundles of a substance located within the seized cardboard boxes. The substance field tested positive for methamphetamine and, in total, there were more than 5,000 pounds of the drug found on the truck in what authorities believe is one of the largest methamphetamine seizures ever in San Diego County.</p> <p>“This is a significant accomplishment by our law enforcement partners,” said U.S. Attorney Randy Grossman. “Due to stellar work by law enforcement agents, the government stopped more than 5,000 pounds of methamphetamine from being distributed on our streets.”</p>

	<p>The defendants in the case have been named as 37-year-old Rafael Alzua, 41-year-olds Mario Contreras and Galdrino Contreras, and 44-year-old Ethgar Velazquez. They have been charged with conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine and, if found guilty, could face a maximum penalty of 10 years to life in prison and a \$10 million fine.</p> <p>“This monumental seizure represents another win against drug cartels that fuel addiction in the United States,” said DEA Special Agent in Charge Shelly S. Howe. “Because of our great partnerships with other law enforcement agencies, we will continue to disrupt the cartels’ flow of drugs into our cities.”</p> <p>The street value of the more than 5,000 pounds of methamphetamine is estimated to be millions of dollars.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/08 Dispatcher didn’t send help, now charged
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/07/08/pennsylvania-911-dispatcher-manslaughter-ambulance-kronk-price/
GIST	<p>Kelly Titchenell called 911 when her mother was suffering after days of heavy drinking. She made a desperate plea for medical assistance to a Pennsylvania dispatcher: “She’s going to die” without immediate help, she said.</p> <p>But instead of immediately sending an ambulance for Diania Kronk in the summer of 2020, the dispatcher asked for more reassurance that Titchenell’s mother would be willing to be taken to a hospital a half-hour away.</p> <p>“She will be, because I’m on my way there, so she’s going or she’s going to die,” Titchenell told the dispatcher with Greene County, Pa., as she drove to her mother’s boyfriend’s home, according to a recording of the 911 call obtained by The Washington Post.</p> <p>Yet, Leon “Lee” Price waited and asked Titchenell to call 911 back once she arrived at the house to make sure Kronk was willing to go in an ambulance. “We really need to make sure she’s willing to go,” he said on the call.</p> <p>Emergency medical services arrived long after the call was over, Titchenell told The Post. Titchenell found her mother nude on the front porch, speaking incoherently and bleeding. Kronk, 54, died of internal bleeding the next day.</p> <p>Now, about two years after Kronk’s death, the 911 dispatcher has been charged with involuntary manslaughter, according to Greene County officials. Price, 50, of Waynesburg, Pa., also faces charges of reckless endangerment, official oppression and obstruction, according to the Associated Press.</p> <p>The charges represent a rare case in which a 911 dispatcher is charged in connection with someone’s death after failing to send help. Price, who was arraigned on June 29 and released on bail, faces the charges after Titchenell filed a federal lawsuit last month in the Western District of Pennsylvania against the dispatcher, Greene County and two 911 supervisors alleging “callous refusal of public emergency medical services.” Lawrence E. Bolind Jr., the attorney who represents Titchenell in the federal lawsuit, told The Post that Price’s hesitance during the nearly four-minute 911 call was “an intentional act.”</p> <p>“I believe in my heart that my mother would still be alive if he would have sent an ambulance,” said Titchenell, 38, of Mather, Pa. “It shouldn’t have been his decision. He should have sent an ambulance and let the professionals decide if she should go to the hospital or not.”</p> <p>A message left at a phone number listed for Price’s home address was not immediately returned Friday. It was unclear whether Price has an attorney.</p>

While Price's employment status with the county remains unclear, Marie Milie Jones, an attorney for the county and 911 supervisors named in the federal case, told The Post that "Mr. Price is a member of a collective-bargaining unit, and the county is following the necessary procedures under the CBA." It was unclear whether Price faced any discipline for the 2020 incident. Jones told the AP that her clients do not believe they are liable for Kronk's death.

"It's unfortunate that this woman had died. Certainly, from a personal standpoint, that's very difficult," Jones said. "I'm not going to comment on the details of her circumstances."

Greene County District Attorney Dave Russo said in a news release that the county detectives' investigation of the case found that "911 services violated protocol and their own procedures by refusing to dispatch an ambulance to Ms. Kronk's aid."

"According to the investigation, she was denied medical services when all three ambulances were available for dispatch," Russo said.

A conviction of involuntary manslaughter carries a prison sentence of up to 10 years, according to Pennsylvania attorneys.

The charges in rural Pennsylvania come weeks after a 911 dispatcher in Buffalo was fired after a Tops supermarket employee trapped during the deadly mass shooting there in May was hung up on. Erie County dispatcher Sheila E. Ayers was initially placed on administrative leave after Latisha Rogers, an assistant office manager at the supermarket, told the Buffalo News and WGRZ that she called 911 and whispered to the dispatcher in hope of making authorities aware of the mass shooting unfolding at the grocery store. But instead of assistance in a moment when she was "scared for my life," Rogers said, the 911 dispatcher dismissed her in "a very nasty tone." Ayers was terminated last month after eight years with Erie County's Central Police Services Department.

While criminal charges against 911 dispatchers are rare, they are not unheard of. In 2008, a 911 dispatcher in Detroit was sentenced to a year of probation and lost her job for not taking a boy's call seriously when he told the operator that his mother had collapsed. Sherrill Turner, 46, was found dead hours after Sharon Nichols allegedly hung up on Turner's young son in 2006 and accused him of playing games. The dispatcher had testified in the case that she could not hear the child.

Kronk worked in home health care and loved taking care of others, her daughter said. Kronk, who had five grandchildren, loved cooking for family and friends, especially her famous baked rigatoni with pepperoni.

"She wanted to make sure everyone else was okay," Titchenell said.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit, Titchenell was vulnerable because of her autoimmune disorders, she said. She also suffered from fibromyalgia, a chronic neuromuscular disorder with no known cure. Though she and her mother had lived together in Mather — a small town more than 50 miles south of Pittsburgh — Kronk was spending more time at her boyfriend's place in an effort to not bring the virus into Titchenell's home.

"I panicked and didn't want to have her coming and going. That's why she stayed there for a long period of time," she said. "I didn't want her bringing the germs back here."

Titchenell knew her mother's drinking had increased during the early part of the pandemic, which led to weight loss and her "turning yellow," she said. But a text message from her brother that their mother was "in a bad way" prompted the daughter to drive to where Kronk was staying in nearby Sycamore, Pa., according to court records.

On July 1, 2020, Titchenell called 911 and was connected to Price. Cellphone service where her mother was staying was not good, so she called 911 before she arrived, Titchenell told The Post. At the start of the

call, she explained that her mother was suffering after days of heavy drinking and urged for an ambulance to go get her.

“I can’t get her in my car. ... She can’t even move,” Titchenell said, according to the 911 call.

During the call, Price repeatedly told Titchenell that Greene County could not force Kronk to go in an ambulance if she didn’t want to do so. At this point, Titchenell told The Post, she was confused as to what was going on.

“I didn’t understand because usually if you call 911 they send help,” she said. “It really didn’t make any sense to me.”

After Titchenell told the dispatcher that her mother “isn’t in her right state of mind right now” to make that decision, Price bluntly told Titchenell that “no emergency services would be provided” without confirmation from Kronk that she would go to the hospital, according to court records.

“Can we at least try?” Price asked of Titchenell.

When Titchenell said she was 10 minutes away from her mother’s boyfriend’s residence, Price suggested she hang up and call 911 back to “make sure she wants to go before we send resources out there.”

“I’m sorry,” Titchenell said.

“No, don’t be sorry, ma’am,” Price replied. “Just call me when you get out there, okay?”

Bolind told The Post that Price “never notified the police, never notified anyone to follow up” about Kronk’s condition.

“At some point, Mrs. Titchenell believes there was a decision made that for whatever reason, in her opinion, they did not want to waste resources to go out to where her mother was staying,” he said.

An autopsy later concluded that Kronk died of internal bleeding.

Russo, the district attorney, told The Post that the next month of the investigation should determine whether additional charges will be brought against Price or the county.

“No one should be denied emergency services in Greene County or anywhere else,” he said. “Everyone should have equal protections and access to medical treatment.”

Titchenell described the past two years as being hell for her and her family. While she hopes for accountability, she said, she thinks about one of the questions she would ask the dispatcher if they were to speak again: “What would you do if this happened to your mother?”

“I don’t ever want this to happen to anybody else,” she said.

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HEADLINE	07/09 Japan investigates gunman's motives
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/09/shinzo-abe-assassination-japan-tetsuya-yamagami/
GIST	<p>TOKYO — The top law enforcement official in Nara, where former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated on Friday, acknowledged security lapses at the political rally where Abe was killed, and pledged to identify and resolve the flaws.</p> <p>Investigations are underway into the security protocols, as well as the gunman’s motives and homemade firearms, as Japan reels from the shocking shooting of its longest-serving prime minister. Abe was rallying</p>

support for a candidate in Sunday's upper house elections on an open street, when a gunman went behind him and fired two shots.

"It is undeniable that there were problems with the security for former prime minister Abe, and we will immediately identify the problems and take appropriate measures to resolve them," said Tomoaki Onizuka, head of Nara Prefecture Police, at a Saturday news conference.

Onizuka said police were informed of Abe's appearance just a day before — a shorter notice than usual for a campaign event. He approved the security plan on the day of the event and had no concerns with it at the time. It is unclear whether, or how many, armed security personnel were present.

Police are probing whether the security setup was similar to that of a June 28 event that Abe attended in the same location. They are also looking into if the placement and number of security staff may have changed, particularly behind Abe.

The apparent gunman, a 41-year-old unemployed man from Nara named Tetsuya Yamagami, told investigators he believed Abe was linked to a group he hated, police said. Police have declined to identify the group, citing the ongoing investigation. They have not given an official briefing since Friday.

On Saturday, a long line of mourners paid their respects at the site of the shooting in Nara, near Osaka. Abe's body was returned to Tokyo in a hearse, and Kishida visited his predecessor's home to offer his condolences. Other leaders from their conservative Liberal Democratic Party stood outside Abe's residence and bowed as his body arrived.

The Abe family will hold a wake on Monday and funeral on Tuesday for relatives and close acquaintances. Plans for a potential state funeral have not been released.

Police have shared little information about the alleged shooter, but some details trickled out on Saturday through police sources in Japanese media. Yamagami was a Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force member for three years in his early 20s. Police found multiple homemade guns in his home Friday. He was arrested on-site and police say he admitted to the killing, which he said was not politically motivated.

He told investigators that his mother had become bankrupt after spending her money to support a religious group, according to Japanese newspaper Mainichi Shimbun, which cited police sources. He said his family fell apart because of his mother's obsession with the group, and he targeted Abe "out of resentment," Mainichi reported.

Yamagami told police he intended to kill Abe with an explosive, but instead used what he considered to be the most lethal weapon for the attack, public broadcaster NHK reported.

The suspect had followed Abe to his previous speeches, and was in the western city of Okayama, where Abe was campaigning on Thursday night, according to the Kyodo News agency. Police are investigating whether Yamagami followed Abe with the intent of finding the right time to kill him.

Japan preserves capital punishment for "atrocious crimes," which refers to multiple murders or a murder that is deemed particularly heinous. Abe's assassination may fit that criteria.

In Japan, campaign events have minimal visible security. Attacks on politicians are rare in postwar Japan, which has one of the lowest homicide rates in the world and almost no gun violence. The number of armed guards present varies depending on the event.

On Saturday, incumbent Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida returned to the campaign trail with heightened security. Hundreds of attendees at Kishida's outdoor event in Yamanashi, west of Tokyo, went through bag checks and metal detectors. Kishida spoke on a stage mounted on a van, surrounded by police and distanced from the crowd, ahead of Sunday's election.

Supporters of opposition parties urged voters to separate their grief from their ballot. They are concerned about a potential rally-around-the-flag effect that would motivate a sympathy vote for the LDP, or increase the turnout of the conservative party's supporters. One of the trending terms on Twitter in Japan was "a vote is not a funeral offering."

Japanese media struggled to balance covering the assassination while not advantaging Abe's ruling party in the final stretch of the campaign. One television outlet blurred out the faces of LDP candidates, but on another channel, anchors wore black clothes and focused heavily on Abe's legacy.

The LDP, which has dominated Japanese politics since its founding in 1955, is expected to be victorious. If the party maintains or expands its control of the House of Councillors, it would clear the path for Kishida, elected in October, to enact some of his most ambitious policy proposals.

Kishida has introduced a vague economic overhaul plan and is considering increases in defense spending, a controversial issue in a country with a pacifist constitution that Abe had long tried to amend.

Security around Abe's home in Tokyo had tightened overnight, with more police officers on-site. Abe, one of the most recognizable and divisive politicians in Japan, had freely walked his dog and taken selfies with passersby with no visible protection.

Japan's National Police Agency has launched a probe into the security protocols that were in place for Abe.

Abe was guarded by a team from Nara's police department and officers from the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, according to Japanese news outlet Jiji Press.

Kishida spoke on the phone with President Biden Saturday morning. After the shooting, Biden visited the Japanese ambassador's residence in Washington and signed a condolence book.

"On behalf of the Biden family and all of America we extend our heartfelt sympathy to the Abe family and the people of Japan," Biden wrote. "It is not only a loss to his wife and family — and the people of Japan, but a loss to the world. A man of peace and judgment — he will be missed."

Abe, who was 67, remained a power broker in his party even after leaving office. He was a towering figure at home and abroad who hailed from a prominent political family. He served a brief first stint as premier in 2006, making him the youngest person to become prime minister of postwar Japan.

He died Friday of blood loss less than five hours after being shot in the neck and chest. The assassin fired twice, and the second shot caused both wounds, police said — raising questions of what type of gun and ammunition had been used.

The shooting reverberated throughout the country, which has low crime rates and some of the world's most restrictive gun laws. Firearms are scarce, as are fatal shootings, of which there was exactly one in all of 2021.

Last year, eight of the 10 shootings in Japan were related to the yakuza, according to the National Police Agency, resulting in one death and four injuries.

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HEADLINE	07/08 Capitol rioter sentenced 21 days in prison
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/wa-man-at-capitol-riot-sentenced-to-21-days-in-prison/
GIST	BATTLE GROUND, Wash. — A southwestern Washington man who pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor for his role in the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol was sentenced Friday to 21 days in prison and supervised release.

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